Return address:

Literary Journalism Studies
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Published at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University
1845 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208, United States

LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

VOL. 14, NO.1, JUNE 2022

Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* and Its Historic Relation to Literary Journalism

Literary Journalism Studies

Vol. 14, No. 1, June 2022

Danish Literary Journalism: Arts + Culture

The Journal of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

Inside Front Cover:
This issue's cover was designed by Anthony DeRado. The image of ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark, is by Anders Trærup.

Literary Journalism Studies

Vol. 14, No. 1, June 2022

Website: www.literaryjournalismstudies.org

Literary Journalism Studies is the journal of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies and is published twice yearly. For information on subscribing or membership, go to www.ialjs.org.

Indexed in Elsevier; Scopus
Member of the Council of Learned Journals

Published twice a year, June and December issues.
Subscriptions, $50/year (individuals), $75/year (libraries).

ISSN 1944-897X (paper)
ISSN 1944-8988 (online)

Literary Journalism Studies

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Published at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University
1845 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208, United States

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES invites submissions of original scholarly articles on literary journalism, which is also known as narrative journalism, literary reportage, reportage literature, New Journalism, and the nonfiction novel, as well as literary and narrative nonfiction that emphasizes cultural revelation. The journal has an international focus and seeks submissions on the theory, history, and pedagogy of literary journalism throughout the world. All disciplinary approaches are welcome. Submissions should be informed with an awareness of the existing scholarship and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length, including notes. To encourage international dialogue, the journal is open to publishing on occasion short examples or excerpts of previously published literary journalism accompanied by a scholarly gloss about or an interview with the writer who is not widely known outside his or her country. The example or excerpt must be translated into English. The scholarly gloss or interview should generally be between 1,500 and 2,500 words long and indicate why the example is important in the context of its national culture. Together, both the text and the gloss generally should not exceed 8,000 words in length. The contributor is responsible for obtaining all copyright permissions, including from the publisher, author, and translator, as necessary. The journal is also willing to consider publication of exclusive excerpts of narrative literary journalism accepted for publication by major publishers.

Email submission (as a Microsoft Word attachment) is mandatory. A cover page indicating the title of the paper, the author's name, institutional affiliation, and contact information, along with an abstract (250 words), should accompany all submissions. The cover page should be sent as a separate attachment from the abstract and submission to facilitate distribution to readers. No identification should appear linking the author to the submission or abstract. All submissions must be in English Microsoft Word and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Humanities endnote and bibliography style) <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>. All submissions will be blind reviewed. Send submissions to the editor at <literaryjournalismstudies@gmail.com>.

BOOK REVIEWS are invited. They should be 1,000–2,000 words and focus on the scholarship of literary journalism and recent original works of literary journalism that deserve greater recognition among scholars. Book reviews are not blind reviewed but selected by the book review editor based on merit. Reviewers may suggest book review prospects or write the book review editor for suggestions. Usually reviewers will be responsible for obtaining their respective books. Book reviews and/or related queries should be sent to Nancy L. Roberts at <nroberts@albany.edu>

Note from the Editor . . .

Greetings and welcome to this special issue of *Literary Journalism Studies*, which spotlights current Danish literary journalism, or its more common moniker in that country, Danish cultural journalism. For this occasion, I have the pleasure of handing the editorial reins to Christine Isager of the University of Copenhagen.

The origin of this project dates to pre-pandemic times, specifically the IALJS-14 conference at Stony Brook University, Long Island, United States, in May 2019, where Christine moderated a panel entitled "Transformations of Personas in Literary Journalism and Beyond."

Three years later, Christine and two other scholars have revised their presentations to produce a fascinating group portrait of cultural journalism as it exists in Denmark now. I'll leave it to Christine's introduction to fill you in.

In addition to the fine work of Christine, Nete Nørgaard Kristensen, of the University of Copenhagen, and Steffen Moestrup, of the Danish School of Media and Journalism, in Aarhus, we have also squeezed into this issue a couple of illuminating historical research papers. Pasquale Macaluso, of University of Cape Town, enlightens us with his study of *Rihla bayna al-jibal fi ma'aqil al-tha'irin*, an Arabic text that covers the 1936 Palestinian revolt in ways that sound very much like literary journalism. And Raleigh James Darnell of Sul Ross State University expounds on his theory that Alexander von Humboldt, in his landmark work *Personal Narrative* (1799–1804), through his employment of both objective/rational and subjective/romantic models and consistent use of the picturesque, demonstrates all the signs of a proto-literary journalism.

All five essays include ground-breaking scholarship and expand our knowledge of literary journalism studies while also pointing the way to further research. The issue concludes with a Q&A with *New York Times* feature writer Dan Barry.

This encouraging news for the future of our chosen field is contrasted by recent heartbreaking news. During the production of this issue, one of the giants of our field—some say the giant of our field—Norman Sims, died on May 15. Norm, as many know, was one of the igniters of literary journalism

as a field of research and published several influential books, including the seminal text *The Literary Journalists* (1984). This was shocking news because for many of us the last time we had been in touch with him, Norm seemed his normal, fine self.

Our remembrance of Norm and his work will be published next issue, which also happens to be another special issue, this time guest edited by Tobias Eberwein and Henrik Michael and focusing on German literary journalism.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this issue.

— Bill Reynolds

Introduction . . .

Danish Literary Journalism: Arts & Culture

Christine Isager, guest editor
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Christine Isager is associate professor of Rhetoric at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, where she teaches writing and rhetorical theory, criticism, and innovation. Her work in the field of literary journalism has previously appeared in Literary Journalism Studies *as well as in* Persona Studies *and* Rhetorica Scandinavica. *She is co-editor (with Robert Alexander) of the volume* Fear and Loathing Worldwide: Gonzo Journalism beyond Hunter S. Thompson *(Bloomsbury, 2018).*

The present three-essay section of *Literary Journalism Studies* puts a spotlight on literary journalism as performed in coverage of arts and culture in Denmark: What professional values, practices, and role conceptions are currently at play in this area? How does *cultural journalism*—traditionally defined by its specific *field*—overlap with *literary journalism*—traditionally defined by its approach—and what might be discovered at the intersections?

These questions are engaged, first, in a keynote essay by Nete Kristensen, who offers a tentative mapping and mirroring of the two paradigms. Kristensen writes as a specialist in cultural journalism in the Nordic region where specific media and culture policies are introduced as a distinct backdrop for the three studies. In her essay, "The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism: Everyday Life, Interpretation, and Emotionality," Kristensen conveys how a still broader conception of culture in media contexts more generally has moved coverage of arts and culture closer to literary journalism in terms of engaging everyday life matters rather than moving in more elite and/or more commercialized spheres. Moreover, the turns in contemporary journalism towards embracing both interpretation and emotionality are presented as good reasons to look more closely at cultural and literary journalism, the practitioners of which have traditionally—if each in their own traditions—stood out from mainstream journalism on account of taking exactly interpretative and emotional dimensions seriously.

Two different case studies by Christine Isager and Steffen Moestrup, respectively, follow up by taking a closer look at two contemporary Danish literary journalists who navigate the above-mentioned, intersecting terrains by toggling between the roles of cultural producer/artist and journalist within individual journalistic stories, as well as over the course of their careers.

Isager takes a cue from Kristensen in terms of considering the alternating or overlapping professional roles in the arts and culture sector by investigating how *de facto* familiarity with a subculture may—for better or worse—be transformed into a form of immersion journalism. Her essay, "The Passive-Responsive Journalist: An Offensive Case of Immersion in the Danish Film Industry," looks specifically at the rhetoric of writer and cultural journalist René Fredensborg (b. 1972) who caused outrage in 2011 by exposing camaraderie in the Danish film and television business in a literary journalistic vein. The form of his reporting became an issue itself, which causes Isager to analyze Fredensborg's peculiar blend of character appeals at the textual level. While subscribing to the generalized ethos of an engaged, responsive literary journalist, Fredensborg also adopts a number of Gonzo poses that were amplified in the magazine's editing of his work and served to betray this same ethos in practice. This ambivalent style both of freelance career and

of literary reporting is identified as a "passive-responsive" rhetorical stance worth taking note of beyond the Nordic context.

Finally, Moestrup engages the work and career of Danish writer, journalist, and food critic Martin Kongstad (b. 1953). To capture the distinct literary journalistic features of Kongstad's playful work across genres and media platforms, Moestrup argues for a *performative* approach to the study of what is more broadly referred to as persona-driven literary journalism. How the latter is flourishing among cultural journalists and critics was the topic of Moestrup's doctoral work from which he here draws special attention to the four key analytical categories that are indicated also in the title of his essay: "Theatricality, Body, Voice, Spatiality: Applying Performance Analysis to Persona-Driven Literary Journalism." Taking a performative approach enables a reading that is particularly sensitive to the cross-media literary quality and nature of Kongstad's literary strategies that include, for instance, the use of multiple voices and presenting fictional characters alongside actual sources.

Early versions of these essays were presented as part of a panel on persona transformations across media and genres in Nordic literary journalism on arts and culture at IALJS-14 at Stony Brook University in 2019. Interested readers might also look up a third Danish case study by Rønlev and Bengtsson that originally formed part of this same panel and was developed for publication in *Journalism* (2020). Titled "The Media Provocateur: A Rhetorical Framework for Studying an Emerging Persona in Journalism," Rasmus Rønlev and Mette Bengtsson's essay engages the routes of so-called non-traditional actors, such as media provocateurs, (micro-)bloggers, and social media influencers, into journalism, that is, here too with the creative design and development of journalistic personas in contemporary media in focus.

With the boundaries of literary journalism becoming still more permeable, and its professional ideologies and practices arguably turning more mainstream, the present, joined perspectives from media studies (Kristensen), performance studies (Moestrup), and rhetoric studies (Isager, and Rønlev and Bengtsson) should point also to scholarly boundaries that might happily be transgressed in further discussions of these developments and their implications. While the specific area of arts and culture has not hitherto been at the center of attention in the practice and study of literary journalism, it is hoped that these studies point to a turn of attention worth making that might inspire further literary journalism studies of creative coverage of arts and culture in nations and regions beyond the Nordic.

Image of ARoS Aarhus Kuntsmuseum, Denmark by Anders Trærup.

The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism: Everyday Life, Interpretation, and Emotionality

Nete Nørgaard Kristensen
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Abstract: This exploration is a first attempt to bring together two strands of research in journalism studies—literary journalism studies and cultural journalism studies—to highlight some of the professional values and practices that literary and cultural journalists share. These include a commitment to everyday events, personal engagement, interpretation and emotions, voice, and providing cultural and aesthetic experiences. While it is important not to be blind to the differences between literary journalism and cultural journalism, it is also important to highlight their commonalities, because other forms of Western journalism, such as news reporting and political journalism, currently appear to be adopting features that literary and cultural journalism have in common. This suggests that while literary and cultural journalism may have gained momentum, they might also be losing some of their distinctive edge. To contextualize this analysis within the broader field of journalism studies, three journalistic trends are highlighted that serve as important perspectives for clarifying the kinship and momentum of literary and cultural journalism: the media's shift of attention from public affairs to everyday life, an interpretive turn in journalism, and a recognition of emotions as a part of journalism. The analysis suggests Denmark as a compelling geographic context for studying the links between literary journalism and cultural journalism because this Nordic country has recently seen media initiatives specifically encouraging literary approaches to cultural reporting.

Keywords: Cultural journalism – the Nordic region – emotionality – everyday life – interpretation

This exploration brings together two research strands in journalism studies that have previously been combined only to a more limited degree: literary journalism studies and cultural journalism studies. In fact, it seems that part of the DNA of literary journalism studies has been to explicitly differentiate itself from what has in recent years been labeled *cultural journalism*—that is, journalism about the arts, culture, and broader sociocultural issues. The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, for example, defines its territory as that of " 'journalism as literature' rather than 'journalism about literature.' "[1] Nonetheless, this exploration focuses on the ways some journalists' work spans literary journalism and cultural journalism, for example, by making use of aestheticized and performative styles when engaging with literature and other parts of the cultural field. Bombaci has pointed to a similar connection in her work on performative criticism, which she sees as a variation of literary journalism that uses irony and humor to engage audiences in the evaluation of literature and visual or performative arts.[2] While her argument is grounded in literary journalism studies and considers the female authors, journalists, and critics Gertrude Stein, Janet Flanner, and Dorothy Parker as cases, the present exploration is based in journalism studies more broadly. Applying a mainly sociological perspective, this study focuses on the professional, institutional, and technological factors affecting the roles and practices of literary journalists and cultural journalists, with special attention to the Nordic context. In-depth case studies of contemporary Danish cultural journalists applying features from literary journalism and of Danish literary journalists engaged in cultural reporting can be found in the work of Christine Isager and Steffen Moestrup.[3]

Although research should not be blind to the differences between literary journalism and cultural journalism, the purpose of this study is first and foremost to suggest some of their commonalities. This is important because both literary journalists and cultural journalists have long been side-lined, as their professional roles, attitudes, and practices differ in several respects from those of mainstream, Western news reporting or political journalism.[4] The latter forms of journalism seem to increasingly adopt features that literary journalism and cultural journalism have in common, however, such as engagement with everyday events, interpretation, emotions and personal style, or tone of voice. This suggests that both literary journalism and cultural journalism may have gained momentum, but it may also suggest that these subfields are losing some of their distinctiveness. In both cases, reflecting actively on their interfaces, shared agendas, and values seems timely and useful, as this may add to both literary journalism and cultural journalism studies by increasing awareness in the respective research strands about their neighboring fields. The

inquiry may also add to the debate about trends in journalism more broadly, inspiring journalism scholars beyond these two research areas to look more systematically at the theories and practices of these subfields and thereby gain new insights about some of the features that increasingly seem to characterize mainstream forms of journalism but which have a long(er) history in these more specialized forms of reporting.

The remainder of the study has four parts: The first part provides a brief introduction to cultural journalism because, unlike literary journalism studies, cultural journalism has emerged only more recently as a scholarly subfield. The second part highlights three trends in contemporary journalism that contextualize the potential kinship of literary journalism and cultural journalism: The first trend concerns the turn in the media's attention from public affairs to the domain of everyday life during recent decades.[5] The second and third trends are related in their concern for the respective interpretive and emotional turns in journalism.[6] These changes may have opened up the broader field of journalism—and journalism studies—for embracing reporting styles drawn from literary journalism and cultural journalism. In the third part, the study presents Denmark as a pertinent case in point for studying the kinship of literary journalism and cultural journalism because the country has seen media initiatives explicitly encouraging literary forms of cultural reporting, especially during the past decade. The fourth and concluding part discusses the potentialities and challenges created by approaches common to literary journalism and cultural journalism seeping into more traditional forms of journalism—that is, in their becoming more mainstream.

Focus, Research, and Professional Traits

As a backdrop for identifying the kinship of literary journalism and cultural journalism, this section takes a closer look at cultural journalism. Compared to literary journalism, the study of cultural journalism is a relatively new scholarly phenomenon that has matured especially over the past decade.[7] As is the case for literary journalism, different terms have been used to refer to cultural journalism, and these terms may mean slightly different things in different contexts.[8] One reason for this is the polysemic and complex concept of culture itself,[9] which may refer to a broad spectrum of artifacts (from arts to entertainment, including particular cultural subfields or genres, such as opera, design, TV series, or crime fiction), to more everyday dimensions of lived culture (such as food and fashion), and to more politicized dimensions (e.g., norms, values, and traditions; and gender, ethnicity, or identity). In addition to covering the arts, cultural goods, and the creative industries, cultural journalism may thus engage with a broad range

of sociocultural and sociopolitical issues. One example is the #MeToo movement. Although this movement has been a topic across many journalistic beats, cultural newsrooms have been important drivers during the past five years, with investigative, analytical, opinion, and cultural stories focusing not only on sexual misconduct in the cultural industries and beyond but also on the broader sociocultural and human implications of inequality and the abuse of power. Although the study of cultural journalism is not yet a global phenomenon, the term *cultural journalism* has become more commonly used in international scholarship during the past decade and is, for that reason, also the term used in the present context.[10]

Cultural journalism studies have taken a particular interest in analyzing, first, the changing genres and cultural outlook of cultural journalism. Comparative and single-country studies have shown that coverage of culture in the broad sense has increased considerably in many countries and across platforms during the twentieth century in view of changing cultural hierarchies, cultural globalization, and the transformation of media institutions.[11] Second, research has focused on the characteristics, professional role conceptions, and actual practices of cultural editors and journalists.[12] Comparative survey research involving journalists from around the globe has shown that cultural journalists are more well-educated and more often work in magazines and radio, and in public service or state-owned media, compared to other journalists.[13] Furthermore, they experience less production pressure and more freedom in story selection and framing, and they value purposes such as educating the public, telling stories, and promoting tolerance more than other journalists do.[14] In the British context, Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen have, for example, found that "arts journalists" see themselves as being on "a crusade to improve society by educating the public about the arts,"[15] and Danish production studies have shown that cultural journalism allows for greater creativity and personality in journalistic writing.[16] Swedish scholars Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm have argued that cultural journalism is "not necessarily defined by content, it is the artistic or literary perspective that matters, and *who* is producing it,"[17] again indicating a creative span. Although these studies do not equate cultural journalism and literary journalism, they do indicate a kinship between the two approaches.

Everyday Life, Interpretation, Emotionality

Three trends in journalism are of importance to the arguments about the commonalities of literary journalism and cultural journalism. They focus on reporting *everyday life*, *interpretation*, and *emotionality*. They are also important as some of their features currently seem to be seeping into other forms of Western journalism.

Everyday Life: The first trend is acutely summarized by Hanitzsch and Vos, who have claimed that "One of the most significant transformations of our time has been a remarkable shift from a media focus on public affairs to a focus on the domain of everyday life."[18] This shift has had implications for the roles journalists play in society, as today these roles pertain not only to the domain of political life but also to the domain of everyday life, including areas such as "consumption, identity, and emotion."[19] From a study of more than 5,300 news stories published by multiple U.S. news outlets from 1980 through 1999, Patterson, for example, shows there have been increases in stories without a public policy component, in stories with a human-interest perspective, and in stories with journalistic self-references.[20]

This has led to the emergence of a range of new(er) journalistic subfields beyond the hard news paradigm. Examples include *service journalism*, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, offering advice and life help to audiences on everyday life issues in an increasingly complex society;[21] *constructive journalism*, which emerged in the 2010s and provides productive, positive, and solutions-oriented stories about social and everyday issues, among other things, as an attempt to reconnect the news industry and their audiences, but with clear traces back to action journalism, public journalism, and service journalism;[22] *feature journalism*, which has a longer history but has increased with time and, Steensen notes, involves a family of genres dominated by "a literary discourse and discourses of intimacy and adventure";[23] and *lifestyle journalism*, which engages with issues related to consumerism, individualism and identity, and has become more prominent in the journalistic supply as the media have taken over the role of providing "collective orientation in an increasingly multi-optional society," as Hanitzsch and Vos put it.[24] Of particular importance in the present context are, however, *literary journalism* with its focus on routine events and ordinary lives,[25] which has expanded and perhaps even been "mainstreamed" in the second half of the twentieth century, as argued by, among others, Collins;[26] and *cultural journalism* with its focus on arts, culture, and the creative industries but, as indicated, sharing its topical interest with literary journalism by also addressing larger cultural themes and current trends rather than the immediate news of the day. A broad understanding of culture and a sociocultural commitment are in many ways key to both literary journalists and cultural journalists: Sims, for example, argues that "literary reporters view cultural understanding as an end,"[27] and Hovden and Kristensen argue that cultural journalists see their role as "providing alternative perspectives on the world, or 'a cultural filter' on pertinent issue[s] of society."[28]

Literary journalism and cultural journalism, among other journalistic subfields, thus exemplify the broader topical refocusing of parts of journalism from public affairs and disruptive events to everyday life, culture, human interest, and routine events. These subfields have, at different points in time, been associated with a need to rethink the role of journalism in Western societies, exemplifying the ever-changing "interpretive community" of journalism.[29]

Interpretation: The second trend is, in many ways, related to this shift of attention in both practice and research, but it has more to do with form, style, or technique than with topical focus. It concerns the *interpretive turn* in news and journalism.[30] Based on a literature study, Salgado and Strömbäck put forward the following definition of this turn:

> Interpretive journalism is opposed to or going beyond descriptive, fact-focused and source-driven journalism. On the story-level of analysis, interpretive journalism is characterized by a prominent journalistic voice; and by journalistic explanations, evaluations, contextualizations, or speculations going beyond verifiable facts or statements by sources. It may, but does not have to, also be characterized by a theme chosen by the journalist, use of value-laden terms, or overt commentary.[31]

Various empirical studies support this: In the U.S. context, Barnhurst points to the increase in explanation, judgment, and opinion across daily news outlets since the 1960s;[32] Soontjens demonstrates that explanation, evaluation, and speculation have become more prominent in Belgian political journalism since the mid-1980s;[33] and Swedish scholars have shown a change in television news reporting from reflection, through investigation, to interpretation during the second part of the twentieth century.[34]

Looking at the histories of both literary journalism and cultural journalism provides evidence that techniques such as going beyond the descriptive, fact-focused, and source-driven, journalistic voice, explanations, evaluations, and contextualization are not new. In literary journalism, a key discussion has concerned the continuum between presenting an "increasingly alienated objectified world on the one hand, or, on the other, a solipsistic subjectivity in the most personal of memoirs," as Hartsock puts it.[35] Referencing Sims, Pauly notes that literary journalists "imagine themselves on an interpretive quest in which reporters deploy an ensemble of literary techniques to make sense of 'true stories' . . . "[36] Similarly, a key debate in cultural journalism studies and practice concerns the dual or hybrid nature of the beat, which has one leg in more traditional forms of cultural reporting, epitomized by the cultural preview genre, and another in more evaluative, critical or interpretive approaches, epitomized by the cultural review and feature genres.[37] In addi-

tion to sharing a broad sociocultural interest, literary journalism and parts of cultural journalism thus share an epistemology grounded in analytical and interpretive approaches. Pauly writes, "Literary journalists assert a knowledge claim when they reject the traditional news story's contrived display of objectivity and routinized, formulaic structure. They seek to capture social complexity in all its richness and nuance, and to celebrate the integrity and cultural authority of the individual reporter."[38] Kristensen presents a similar understanding of the epistemology of cultural journalists as adhering "more to a subjective belief in how reality or truth can be conveyed, often basing their claims to truth on an analytical approach."[39]

What is new is that these dimensions seem to be (re)entering parts of Western journalism that have subscribed to the separation of news and views, distance and immersion, during large parts of the twentieth century as part of the professionalization of the field.

Emotionality: The third trend links to the interpretive aspects of journalism, as it concerns *emotionality*. While interpretation can be connected to an analytical approach, emotionality is tied to a subjective approach, because a key trait of emotions—a term often overlapping with feelings, moods, and affect—is that emotions can, according to Stenvall, be "deduced to be basically subjective experiences."[40] Like interpretation, emotions are not new to journalism, but the use of emotionality has become more prominent and multifaceted. This is due to, among other things, new media technologies blurring the boundaries of not only fact and interpretation but also of rational and emotional discourses,[41] the emergence of an increasingly confessional culture,[42] and because emotionality and emotionally stimulating journalistic narratives may be a means for media producers to cater to audiences in an increasingly competitive and diverse media ecology.[43]

In her study of Pulitzer Prize–winning journalism from 1995 to 2011, Wahl-Jorgensen shows that emotionality—in the shape of personalized storytelling, anecdotal leads, and human interest perspectives—is found across a range of prize categories, including explanatory, international, national, investigative, feature, and public service reporting.[44] Maguire also shows how Pulitzer Prize–winning journalism employs literary journalism techniques, which he sees as a sign of literary journalism having matured and even being mainstreamed in the early twenty-first century.[45] Wahl-Jorgensen also argues, however, that "objectivity as strategic ritual," a concept coined by Tuchman in the early 1970s and key in the professional self-understanding of Western journalists for decades, has made emotions a criticized aspect of journalistic practice and a topic not prioritized by scholars.[46]

What is characteristic of current research about emotionality in journal-

ism is that it focuses especially on the reporting of public affairs and disruptive events. Less attention is devoted to those parts of journalism that have a longer tradition of being emotional and raising emotions, for example, by means of a distinct voice and emotion-laden words and wording. Literary journalism scholars have, for instance, long emphasized the role of emotion in this journalistic subfield. Sims has argued that audiences expect "literary journalism to raise emotions not evoked by standard reporting" and that "[l]iterary journalists bring themselves into their stories to greater or lesser degrees and confess to human failings and emotions."[47] Kramer has argued that the voice of the literary journalist is one that "doesn't blank out emotional realities of sadness, glee, excitement, fury, love,"[48] and Keeble argues that literary journalism is "practiced by artists of integrity and passion."[49] Going back to the seminal work of Wolfe, Collins writes that Wolfe "drew attention to writers who wrote with individual, idiosyncratic voices . . . They wrote with attitude, humor, anger, frankness, style. They incorporated a wider set of emotions than what was allowed in conventional journalism, . . ."[50] Similarly, cultural journalists—and critics in particular—have long reacted emotionally to aesthetic expressions and cultural trends. This is not only because that is what arts and culture do—that is, evoke emotions—but also because critics use emotional language to perform their distinct, critical voice to guide members of the public in their cultural consumption.[51] However, as Kotisva argues, critics perform a "strategic ritual of objectivization of emotionality" as they consciously reflect upon, question, and analyze their emotional and subjective responses to cultural artifacts rather than provide mere subjective responses.[52] Such approaches are also visible in other genres key to cultural journalism. Based on a study of the developments in the cultural pages from 1960 through 2010 in Spain, France, Finland, Great Britain, and Sweden, Purhonen and colleagues conclude that there has been an increase in the length of stories and in the frequency of interviews and features since the beginning of the 2000s, which they interpret as a "trend towards personalized styles of writing, which can be seen as linked to the changing professional ethos of cultural journalism oriented towards emotional appeal, human-interest aspects and storytelling."[53]

Emotionality in literary journalism and cultural journalism thus does not per se signal a change or disruption from the previous logics of these particular forms of journalism. It does, however, emphasize their momentum in the current media landscape, because emotionality and voice have come to the forefront in many forms of media work. Wahl-Jorgensen and Schmidt even argue that, today, the "mastery of the strategic ritual of emotionality is a prerequisite for success in the profession."[54]

The (Nordic) Context Matters

While literary journalism has a strong Anglo-American tradition in both practice and research, cultural journalism has a strong tradition in Northern Europe, especially in Nordic newsrooms.[55] One explanation is the Nordic culture policy model—including the Nordic media model—which supports the production, circulation, and communication of arts and culture in society. Accordingly, research about cultural journalism is particularly robust in the Nordic context. This may be one of the reasons why the similarities between literary journalism and cultural journalism seem to become particularly visible in the Nordic setting. This is a reminder of the importance of the historical and geographical context for understanding new directions within or new forms of journalism,[56] and it is exemplified in the following, which uses Denmark as a case in point.

Culture is a central pillar of the Nordic welfare model. Harding, among others, argues that following World War II, Nordic cultural policy has largely been "characterized by a combination of two, somewhat opposed, normative concepts; the autonomy of the arts, and the democratization of culture."[57] These normative concepts have materialized in considerable public funding for arts and culture to guarantee an arm's length principle between politicians and artists/creatives and to enable all citizens to participate in a broad range of cultural activities. In Denmark, the Ministry of Culture (originally The Ministry for Cultural Affairs) is the main body responsible for the distribution of these funds. Today the Ministry applies an inclusive definition of culture, as its purview includes "Visual Art, Music, Theatre, Film, Libraries, Education in the Arts, Archives, Museums, Zoological Facilities, Cultural Environment, Sport, Broadcasting and Copyright."[58] Eurostat data show that Denmark ranked number three among EU countries in public expenditure on recreation, culture, and religion in 2020, devoting 1.7 percent of the GDP to these areas.[59] Part of this funding is allocated to the media: around 4.9 billion Danish Kroner (DK KR) in 2019, approximately 700 million U.S. dollars.[60] Funds are based on taxes, profits from the national lottery, and football pools, and on media license fees (the latter gradually turned into a tax by 2022). The Danish population of around 5.8 million people are very active users of these cultural offerings and may be labeled cultural omnivores, because they engage in many different forms of both highbrow and popular culture activities.[61]

National news media and their adoption of cultural journalism play a key role as intermediaries between these cultural institutions, producers, and audiences, as they remain relatively strong and authoritative cultural gatekeepers, communicators, and tastemakers. The Nordic media model sup-

ports this mediator role. In Denmark, the key obligations of the main public service media provider, the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR), include the production, distribution, and communication of arts and culture.[62] DR continues to be the top Danish news brand in terms of audience reach and trust.[63] Furthermore, to qualify for subsidies for the production of digital and/or printed journalism, Danish news media have to "primarily treat political, societal and cultural topics," according to §3 of the present *Lov om mediestøtte* [Danish law of media subsidies].[64] This points to the importance of culture—and by extension, of cultural journalism—in Danish media policy. This is one reason this particular domain of journalism has drawn the attention of Danish media and journalism scholars. This is the case not only for Denmark but also for the other Nordic countries.[65]

Of particular importance in the present context is that newer Danish media initiatives have explicitly encouraged literary and performative forms of cultural journalism. Two such examples are highlighted in the following: The first example is the public service radio channel Radio24Syv (Radio24Seven), publicly funded and licensed from 2011 to 2019, with the aim of, among other things, providing room for journalists doing experimental, persona-driven cultural journalism and using techniques known from literary journalism. As Moestrup argues, the people behind this media initiative "wanted to do talk radio in ways that [were] different from the norm," and their vision included three recurring keywords: "an *experimental* approach to radio," radio programs that give "listeners an *experience*" and that "allow *new kinds of voices* to be aired."[66] Over the years, the program portfolio has included various formats devoted to cultural news and/or reviews, typically experimenting with genre conventions and putting the personality and voice of the host at the center. Examples include a conversational wine show, *Flaskens* Ånd (The Spirit in the Bottle), hosted by a well-known Danish journalist, Poul Pilgaard Johnsen, who is both an investigative reporter and a flamboyant wine connoisseur, and who uses his own life story in his narrative wine journalism and criticism;[67] the theatricalized food review show, *Béarnaise er Dyrenes Konge* (Bearnaise Is the King of Beasts), hosted by a well-known Danish multi-artist (novelist, playwriter, drummer, and actor), cultural journalist and critic, Martin Kongstad, who, among other techniques, mixes his fictional writing and culture critical work to stage his reviews;[68] and a daily cultural news program, *AK24Syv* (AK24Seven), hosted by a controversial cultural journalist, René Fredensborg, known for his two novels and his gonzo-like and offensive approaches in his cultural reporting, including quite harsh criticisms and exposures of the close ties between cultural journalists and the cultural industries.[69]

The second example is the independent digital-only news platform Zetland established in 2012, specializing in longform journalism and occasionally producing intimate, live-stage journalism shows.[70] Based on a hybrid business model of public subsidies and subscriptions (called "member fees"), Zetland publishes a news overview and a few feature stories each day. The medium is framed by its founders as a (cultural) community, involving the journalists and its members (aka readers), who all contribute to the journalistic production, as Zetland aims to integrate its members in the editorial process. More specifically, the editorial staff produces journalism based on six commitments, among them that "#1 We *are* our members" and "#6 We are passionate about our journalism and honest about everything we do."[71] The journalists are staged as journalistic personalities, present in their texts, and expected to have an active social media presence.[72] This public visibility and staging are key elements of the construction of Zetland's cultural community and voice. Culture is among the topics treated, but from a broad, sociocultural perspective rather than from the perspective of artists, cultural producers, institutions, or industries. One of Zetland's key (cultural) journalists is freelancer Torben Sangild, who writes not only about culture but also about science, psychology, philosophy, comedy, and debate, thus exemplifying Zetland's broad sociocultural approach.

Neither Radio24Syv nor Zetland is representative of conventional Danish media outlets. Both do, however, exemplify strong media brands cultivating alternative forms of journalism, connoting literary styles of reporting when engaging in cultural issues. Both Radio24Syv and Zetland have influenced the cultural journalism of established media institutions such as DR, which has developed more narrative and persona-driven cultural formats,[73] indicating the broader circulation of such approaches.

Conclusion

The ambition of this exploration has been to start a scholarly conversation about the kinship of literary journalism and cultural journalism. Both forms engage with sociocultural themes and everyday life events more than with disruptive day-to-day news, and they share a passion for artistic, narrative, or otherwise aestheticized approaches, presenting their stories in a distinct voice.[74] Both are concerned not only with reporting events but also with providing audiences aesthetically and linguistically pleasurable experiences performed by writers, novelists, intellectuals, critics, and aesthetically trained academics—perhaps also to a larger degree than by professionally trained journalists.[75] In brief, both groups of journalists follow their own set of (breakable) rules[76] or are journalists with a difference.[77]

There are also important differences between literary journalism and cultural journalism, however. Most literary journalism engages with a broad range of social matters rather than with arts and culture in the narrower sense, as is the case for large parts of cultural journalism. Much cultural journalism is not literary, as cultural journalism basically walks on two legs—partly an artistic, creative, and immersive dimension rooted in the humanities and aesthetics and often associated with cultural criticism; and partly a news-driven and more traditional form of news reporting about arts and culture rooted in journalism.[78] It is especially the former—that is, the artistic, creative, and immersive dimension rooted in the humanities and aesthetics—that links cultural journalism to literary journalism. Furthermore, rather than engaging with ordinary people as literary journalism does, cultural journalism often engages with the cultural elite, their cultural production, creative processes, and everyday lives. Cultural journalists could indeed themselves be considered part of this elite, as they move in the same circles as their creative and cultural-industry networks.[79] Finally, literary journalistic practice requires narrative style and technique along with reporting skills, while cultural journalism—and criticism in particular—requires aesthetic expertise, as knowledge about particular cultural domains has long been a prerequisite for practicing this particular subgenre of journalism.[80] It may be stretching the argument too far to argue that literary journalism is closer to "literature" than cultural journalism is, and that cultural journalism is more "journalistic" than literary journalism is, to rephrase the definition of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, cited in the introduction. But some parts of cultural journalism do involve more conventional forms of reporting than literary journalism uses.

A key reason for highlighting their commonalities more than their differences in this analysis has been that recent years' expansion and mainstreaming of traits from both literary and cultural journalism tap into broader trends in journalism—the shift of topical attention from public affairs to everyday life, and the shifts in journalistic style from mainly descriptive to added interpretation, and from rationality to the inclusion of emotion. This has challenged the normative idea that factual, objective reporting about the most important events of the day is the main, legitimate form of Western journalism. A key question for future research is whether the trend that some of the values, traits, and professional logics shared by literary journalism and cultural journalism are seeping into these more mainstream forms of journalism signals momentum or dilution for literary journalism and cultural journalism. One could argue that it is a testament to the broader professional recognition of the potential of such journalistic modes for engaging audiences. But one

could also argue that when such modes become mainstream to the journalistic toolbox, they lose some of their "power to shock and motivate," as Maguire noted,[81] which may challenge their role in the broader societal narrative of journalism. This paradox is further accentuated by digital media technologies, which have, on the one hand, given "the people formerly known as the audience"[82] access to tell stories, perform cultural and societal criticism, and cultivate everydayness in a distinct voice on (v)logs, in podcasts, and other innovative formats.[83] On the other hand, new media technologies have also provided professional literary journalists and cultural journalists with new means of audience engagement and innovative storytelling—potentially reinforcing the momentum of literary and cultural journalism. That is one reason why studying the kinship of literary and cultural journalism seems particularly pertinent today.

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Notes

[1] International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, "About Us."

[2] Bombaci, "Performative Criticism and the Problem of Modernist Chic," 132.

[3] Isager, "The Passive-Responsive Journalist," 32–51; Moestrup, "Theatricality, Body, Voice, Spatiality," 52–73.

[4] Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 3–5; Kristensen, "Cultural Journalism—Journalism about Culture," 3; Maguire, "Literary Journalism at the Center," 213.

[5] Hanitzsch and Vos, "Journalism beyond Democracy," 146–64.

[6] Salgado and Strömbäck, "Interpretive Journalism," 144–61; Wahl-Jorgensen, "An Emotional Turn in Journalism Studies," 175–94.

[7] Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, "The Culture of Arts Journalists," 619–39; Hellman and Jaakkola, "From Aesthetes to Reporters," 783–801; Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm, "Cultural Journalism," 1–21.

[8] Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 1; Kristensen, "Cultural Journalism—Journalism about Culture," 2–3; Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm, "Cultural Journalism," 3.

[9] Williams, "Culture," 87.

[10] Kotisova, "An elixir of life?," 1–17; Kristensen, "Cultural Journalism—Journalism about Culture," 4; Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm, "Cultural Journalism," 3.

[11] Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord, "Cultural Globalization and Arts Journalism," 719–40; Purhonen et al., *Enter Culture, Exit Arts?*, 52, 120, 146.

[12] Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, "The Culture of Arts Journalists," 619–39; Hellman and Jaakkola, "From Aesthetes to Reporters," 783–801.

[13] Hovden and Kristensen, "The Cultural Journalist around the Globe," 695–97.

[14] Hovden and Kristensen, 697–702.

[15] Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, "The Culture of Arts Journalists," 635.

[16] Kristensen, *Journalister og Kilder* [Journalists and news sources], 210.

[17] Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm, "Cultural Journalism," 2 (emphasis in original).

[18] Hanitzsch and Vos, "Journalism beyond Democracy," 156.

[19] Hanitzsch and Vos, 157.

[20] Patterson, "Doing Well and Doing Good," 3–5.

[21] Eide and Knight, "Public/Private Service: Service Journalism and the Problems of Everyday Life," 526–47.

[22] Bro, "Constructive Journalism," 504.

[23] Steensen, "The Featurization of Journalism," 59.

[24] Hanitzsch and Vos, "Journalism beyond Democracy," 157; Hanusch and Hanitzsch, "Mediating Orientation and Self-Expression in the World of Consumption," 943–59.

[25] Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 2; Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," 27–28; Sims, "The Art of Literary Journalism," 3.

[26] Collins, "From Magazines to Newsprint," 209.

[27] Sims, "The Literary Journalists," 5.

[28] Hovden and Kristensen, "The Cultural Journalist around the Globe," 701. A study of multiculturalism, immigration, and integration in Nordic news media shows, for example, that cultural coverage more often offers "resources for identification, empathy and arguments for specific points of view" compared to coverage by other beats. Riegert and Hovden, "Identity, Empathy and Argument," 158.

[29] Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities, Revisited," 181–90.

[30] Barnhurst, "The Interpretive Turn in News," 111–41.

[31] Salgado and Strömbäck, "Interpretive Journalism," 154.

[32] Barnhurst, "The Interpretive Turn in News," 111–41.

[33] Soontjens, "The Rise of Interpretive Journalism," 963.

[34] Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, "From Public Educator to Interpreting Ombudsman," 195.

[35] Hartsock, *Literary Journalism and the Aesthetics of Experience*, 3.

[36] Pauly, "The New Journalism and the Struggle for Interpretation," 590; Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism*.

[37] Hellman and Jaakkola, "From Aesthetes to Reporters," 783–801.

[38] Pauly, "The New Journalism and the Struggle for Interpretation," 590.

[39] Kristensen, "Cultural Journalism—Journalism about Culture," 6.

[40] Stenvall, "On Emotions and the Journalistic Ideals of Factuality and Objectivity," 1751.

[41] Wahl-Jorgensen, "An Emotional Turn in Journalism Studies?," 175–94.

[42] Coward, "Confessional Journalism," 91–112.

[43] Peters, "Emotion Aside or Emotional Side?," 310.

[44] Wahl-Jorgensen, "The Strategic Ritual of Emotionality," 129–45.

[45] Maguire, "Literary Journalism at the Center," 213.

[46] Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual," 660–79; Wahl-Jorgensen, "The Strategic Ritual of Emotionality," 129–45.

[47] Sims, "The Literary Journalists," 4.

[48] Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," 29.

[49] Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 2.

[50] Collins, "From Magazines to Newsprint," 200.

[51] Chong, "Valuing Subjectivity in Journalism," 427–43; Kristensen, "Critical Emotions," 1590–1607; Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm, "Cultural Journalism," 9.

[52] Kotisova, "An Elixir of Life?," 12, 13.

[53] Purhonen et al., *Enter Culture, Exit Arts?*, 186.

[54] Wahl-Jorgensen and Schmidt, "News and Storytelling," 266.

[55] Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 12; Kristensen and Riegert, "Why Cultural Journalism in the Nordic Countries?," 9–23.

[56] Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 12.

[57] Harding, "Cultural Policy Research in the Nordic Countries," 9.

[58] Ministry of Culture Denmark, "Public Support to the Arts and Culture," para. 1.

[59] Eurostat, "Government Expenditure on Recreation, Culture and Religion."

[60] Ministry of Culture Denmark, "Medieaftale 2019–2023" [Media Agreement 2019–2023].

[61] Ministry of Culture Denmark, *Danskernes Kulturvaner* [Danes' cultural habits 2012], 13.

[62] According to DR's public service contract 2019–2023, "DR should focus on Danish arts and culture all over the country and on communication about Danish culture, history, nature and climate, and cultural heritage, including the Christian cultural heritage. DR should collaborate with cultural agents all over the country about the communication of Danish culture." Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR), "DR's Public Service-Kontrakt for 2019–2023" ["DR's Public Service-Contract 2019–2023"], 2 (translations from the original are the author's).

[63] DR's news reaches 59 percent of all Danes every week, and 78 percent of all Danes trust this news institution. Newman et al., "3.07 Denmark," 68.

[64] *Lov om mediestøtte* [Danish law of media subsidies], 1604 §3.7.

[65] Kristensen and Riegert, "Why Cultural Journalism in the Nordic Countries?," 9–23.

[66] Moestrup, "Performing the Persona," 7 (emphasis in original), referencing Knudsen and Ramskov, *Radio24syv Public Service Redegørelse 2011*.

[67] Moestrup, "Performing the Persona," 111–43.

[68] Moestrup, "Theatricality, Body, Voice, Spatiality," 52–73.

[69] Isager, "The Passive-Responsive Journalist," 32–51; Fredensborg, *Hønsehunde* [Bird Dogs: Novel]; Fredensborg, *Sjuft* [Douchebag].

[70] Isager, "Literary Journalism in Denmark," 12.

[71] Zetland, "About Zetland."

[72] Zetland, "Integritet og etik på Zetland" [Integrity and ethics at Zetland].

[73] A recent example is DR's program *ArtyFarty* (aired in 2020), which presented itself as the "self-smart cultural cousin, who you did not know existed, but who turns out to be both fascinating, funny, and bordering on the maniacally geeky in his approach to arts, theater, literature, etc. Each program goes into depth with a well-known cultural topic or phenomenon and advances with surprising angles and gestures" (author's translation). DR, *ArtyFarty*. Several former Radio24syv hosts were part of the program, among them René Fredensborg in some episodes.

[74] Hellman and Jaakkola, "From Aesthetes to Reporters," 788; Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 2; Kristensen, "Cultural Journalism—Journalism about Culture," 1–13; Pauly, "The New Journalism and the Struggle for Interpretation," 590.

[75] Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 6–7; Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm, "Cultural Journalism," 5.

[76] Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," 21.

[77] Hovden and Kristensen, "The Cultural Journalist around the Globe," 689–708.

[78] Hellman and Jaakkola, "From Aesthetes to Reporters," 786–88; Hovden and Knapskog, "Doubly Dominated," 791–92.

[79] Hovden and Knapskog, 791–92.

[80] Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, "The Culture of Arts Journalists," 624; Hellman and Jaakkola, "From Aesthetes to Reporters," 787.

[81] Maguire, "Literary Journalism at the Center," 220.

[82] Rosen, "The People Formerly Known as the Audience," 13.

[83] Collins, "From Magazines to Newsprint," 209.

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Image of René Fredensborg by Robin Skjoldborg

The Passive-Responsive Journalist: An Offensive Case of Immersion in the Danish Film Industry

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Abstract: This study examines a controversial piece of magazine journalism on cliquish culture in the Danish film industry, "Frygt og lede i Avedøre og omegn" [Fear and loathing in and around Avedøre] by René Fredensborg, which was featured in the Danish film magazine *Ekko* in 2011. The study identifies stylistic features that emerge as the reporter mixes playful Gonzo poses with injured personal testimony, ultimately blaming social forces or immersion as such for the consequences of his coverage. A personal narrative based on immersion would seem a promising way of exploring social dynamics in a small, Nordic, high-trust society such as Denmark's, especially in the domain of arts and culture, in which the roles and interests of journalists and cultural actors tend to overlap. Fredensborg's approach on this occasion, however, displays several pitfalls in the enactment of the dedicated, responsive style of engagement associated with literary journalism. Drawing on the trope of getting carried away, Fredensborg's story showcases a peculiar, passive form of responsiveness that serves to renounce professional and personal responsibility.

Keywords: immersion – trust – rhetorical style – Gonzo journalism – cultural journalism – Denmark

Along with the other Nordic countries, Denmark is categorized as a high-trust society in which corruption is rare, and citizens generally have a high level of confidence in each other and in public institutions.[1] While the benefits of such a culture of trust are in many respects invaluable, that culture poses its own challenges to journalists at work, including journalists who cover arts and culture. In her extensive work on the nature of this beat, Kristensen offers the following characterization:

> [A]rtists, cultural producers and journalists . . . often mingle in the same circles through friendship-like relations or close collegial collaborations, and cultural journalists often share their sources' aims, interests and passions for art and culture rather than playing the traditional adversary role . . . Such a situation is especially pronounced in a geographical context like the Danish with a small-scale cultural scene and press . . . .[2]

While a culture of trust—and even of bonding—might be seen as a spontaneous or generalized form of immersion beneficial to literary journalism practice in the area, it clearly constrains and potentially compromises journalistic credibility and agency.

To investigate dilemmas that invariably arise when reporting is based on close interaction with sources, the present case study looks to a controversial magazine story about the Danish film industry that provides an interesting terrain to reflect on the ethos or perceived credibility of the immersed and invested literary journalist. Giving special attention to rhetorical style and presentation of self at the textual level helps answer questions such as: How are *readers* invited to make sense of a reporter's ambivalent role of both insider and outsider? What specific stylistic features are at work to make them like and trust (or not) the journalist who mingles and reports?

The study focuses on the reporter and writer René Fredensborg (b. 1972), who in 2011 challenged the abovementioned friendly context as well as his readers' ethical sensibilities by moving through the social and professional circles of the Danish film industry in the role of aspiring film producer and later deciding to report on the experience as a literary journalist. Fredensborg's case is somewhat extreme but an all the more illustrative enactment of the generalized ethos of literary journalists that, as Kristensen argues, is not only shared with cultural journalists in important ways but is also currently gaining momentum and mainstream status.[3] While this ethos tends to be romanticized as that of journalists working with passion and integrity,[4] Fredensborg's approach draws attention to particular ways of evoking and subverting such expectations, turning virtues into pretensions and, for better or worse, offending because of them.

Fredensborg foregrounds what Wilson refers to as the second order nar-

rative in immersion journalism, "that is, a coexisting literary story about *how* the text we're reading ostensibly came to be researched and written," at the expense of first order, ethnographic coverage. In this respect, the story fits Wilson's notion of contemporary "*post*ethnographic" immersion journalism if partly despite itself.[5] Fredensborg's failure to blend in as part of the film community explicitly becomes the main point of the story while, however, his ensuing claim to an outsider status never becomes persuasive either.

Peculiar to Fredensborg's immersion narrative is what will be presented here as a "passive-responsive" stance that frames the journalist as a victim of circumstance and serves to relieve him of professional and personal responsibility for the story of which he is part. To this end, the reading of Fredensborg's work herein will draw specifically on a rhetorical notion of *responsiveness* to capture what is arguably a cardinal virtue of literary journalists that invites emulation as well as more dubious distortions. That is to say, literary journalism is conceived as a *situated art of response*, associated with its practitioners' openness to learn from and be affected by social experience, as well as a more questionable inclination to become caught up in, or even carried away by, social experience. Literary journalists ultimately perform this balancing act at the textual level to win the goodwill of a specific readership, so this is where the ethos of literary journalism in specific settings—such as the arts and culture sector in contemporary Denmark—takes form and can be scrutinized more closely.

Fredensborg's Persona in a Danish Context

René Fredensborg is an exponent of what Moestrup refers to as persona-driven cultural journalism.[6] Since graduating from the Danish School of Journalism in 2001, Fredensborg has covered mainly arts and culture as a newspaper reporter, a television satire host, a longform magazine writer, a music and film reviewer, and a columnist/blogger in national print media.[7] Quite consistently, Fredensborg has transgressed the formats he has worked with, establishing an image of being invested and (sometimes overly) passionate, or putting himself on the line, as the popular phrase has it.

For example, Fredensborg was temporarily suspended from his job at the free national newspaper *Nyhedsavisen* after covering riots in the streets of Copenhagen in 2007. Under the title "Mit (sølle) liv som activist" (My [miserable] life as an activist), he reported as a participant observer on the side of rioters in violent confrontations with the police over the clearance and condemnation of Ungdomshuset (The Youth House), that had served for decades as an autonomous countercultural community space.[8] The article prefigures many of the features of the present study's key subject, "Frygt og lede

i Avedøre og omegn" (Fear and loathing in and around Avedøre), published in the quarterly *Ekko* film magazine in 2011.[9] In both pieces, Fredensborg appears determined to prove his readiness to be part of a group of people he is immersed in and goes far in terms of letting social pressure determine his actions. In his 2007 activist story, he states this quite explicitly: "I am simply getting carried away by the atmosphere. Especially when somebody [a rioter] places a cobblestone in my hand and asks me to throw it [at the police]."[10] Not surprisingly, this passage offended readers and colleagues, who criticized Fredensborg's participant observation as unprofessional, militant, and illegal.[11]

What might be more surprising, considering the formal suspension of Fredensborg, is the way a chief editor at *Nyhedsavisen*, Simon Andersen, defended Fredensborg's coverage of the riots. In a long blog post that amounts to an inventory of the classic distinguishing features of literary journalism, Andersen characterized Fredensborg's reporting as "norm breaking, trendsetting, and unique," "stylish," "empathic," "unforgettable," and "in a class by itself."[12] He expresses hope that Fredensborg's methods inspire colleagues and recognizes Fredensborg as engaged and able to "get inside the minds of the activists."[13] Moreover, Andersen's response celebrates Fredensborg's work at the explicit expense of mainstream journalism as practiced at the largest national daily, the center-right-leaning *Jyllands-Posten*. Its work Andersen describes as comparatively "neat" and squeamish (with reporters in cover behind police lines), "tedious," "ridden with banalities and clichés," prejudiced, and uncovering nothing.[14] Apart from the polemical tone in the latter quoted passages, it is fair to say that the earlier portrayal sketches a professional ethos that literary journalists would generally identify with or aspire to. On this occasion, it is evoked not just to pave the way for Fredensborg's return to his job but also serves to brand and promote *Nyhedsavisen*, which had been launched just a year earlier. The newspaper was delivered to households in the largest Danish cities and made available at train stations and other public spaces, including upper secondary schools, deliberately counting and targeting a young audience as part of its wide national readership. The relatively large and young staff worked independently of news agencies with the declared intention to challenge conventional notions of news content by giving equal priority to lifestyle/human interest, science, and political stories.[15]

In terms of shaping Fredensborg's own professional persona and later career, the peculiar combination of being celebrated while suspended transgresses the paradigm of literary journalism and points to the ethos of Gonzo journalism and the "first person major showman" style of Hunter S. Thompson (1937–2005).[16] In Thompson's case, Mosser writes, the radically subjec-

tive, participatory, and flamboyant style became a way for him to "differentiate himself from other New Journalists of the same era—Wolfe, Mailer, Didion."[17] To this day, differentiation remains important to the Gonzo ethos, even if its components have turned into a paradigm that also tempts clichés.[18] The writer and immersive reporter Matthew Thompson has been called "Australia's answer to Hunter S. Thompson" for reasons that apply to Fredensborg in Denmark—if Thompson's political orientation is exchanged with cultural orientation in the following list of shared features presented by Kremmer:

> [O]bserved commonalities [between Thompson and Thompson] include literary techniques such as immersion, quests, an outsider perspective, satire, idealism, literary-political stunts, humor, drug tropes, and critiques of journalistic practice and political leaders.[19]

The most obvious example of such work on Fredensborg's part is his debut novel *Hønsehunde* [Bird Dogs: Novel] (in 2011, i.e., the same year as the *Ekko* story that sported the signature Thompson title prefix "Fear and Loathing . . ."). *Hønsehunde* is a satirical first-person narrative and road trip of a reporter looking for an interview with Bon Jovi during the band's (actual) visit to Denmark in 2008.[20] A pastiche of Hunter Thompson's 1971 Gonzo classic *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*,[21] Fredensborg's novel was recognized as a roman à clef about the Danish music industry, music journalism included.

While performative and playful in the style of Thompson, Fredensborg's work has followed a more general, international turn toward confessional and emotionalist journalism too.[22] In a 2008 study, Isager argues that Danish Gonzo journalism has taken on a peculiar confessional and autobiographical flavor,[23] and the transformed genre's ambivalent toggling between irony and sincerity seems to have been reinforced in Fredensborg's work as an arts and culture beat reporter. Notably, 2011 was also the year when a new national radio station, Radio24syv, added Fredensborg to its list of high-profile hosts. Famously, the station attracted, promoted, and made the most of various profiles that had been prominent voices in other cultural, political, and media contexts.[24] Indeed, much criticism was directed at the station during its existence from 2011 to 2019 for being a notorious hotbed for a cliquish cultural elite, as portrayed by Kristensen.[25] This popular image of 24syv put Fredensborg's dual role of cultural-elite insider and autonomous Gonzo-like outsider to the test in his presentation of self. The test continues,[26] but it was prefigured spectacularly in the *Ekko* story that made one trait obvious: in terms of the insider/outsider balancing act, Fredensborg shares Thompson's philosophy that, despite bonding—or getting drunk or high—with sources, everything that happens to him may potentially be reported. Thompson writes:

> As far as I was concerned [when covering the U.S. presidential campaign in 1972], there was no such thing as "off the record." The most consistent and ultimately damaging failure of political journalism in America has its roots in the clubby/cocktail personal relationships that inevitably develop between politicians and journalists—in Washington or anywhere else where they meet on a day-to-day basis. When professional antagonists become after-hours drinking buddies, they are not likely to turn each other in . . . especially not for "minor infractions" of rules that neither side takes seriously; and on the rare occasions when Minor infractions suddenly become Major, there is panic on both ends.[27]

In "Frygt og lede i Avedøre og omegn" [Fear and loathing in and around Avedøre], René Fredensborg decides to betray exactly such an "after-hours drinking buddy" from the film community. Technically, the story is a third-order narrative, as it covers Fredensborg's experiences behind the scenes when producing a documentary that covers, in turn, Fredensborg's experiences behind the scenes of the Danish employment system as a job seeker. Offended by what he experienced firsthand as unhealthy camaraderie in the film and TV business, he eventually decided to write about the process of planning and applying for public funding for his documentary. In the wake of the story's publication, a public film consultant lost his job, and Fredensborg received strong reactions from prominent cultural actors in the film industry, who called him "en klam lille lort" (a disgusting little nobody [shit]) who "betrays people's trust by drawing a Gonzo-like caricature to get his 15 minutes of fame."[28] Fredensborg is referred to as hypocritical, "miffed like a schoolgirl," an attention-seeking, deficient version of German social documentarist and activist Günter Wallraff or the U.S. documentarist Michael Moore, who adopts a transparent "contrived naïveté."[29] This reception reflects the aforementioned and unresolved tension between sincerity and irony, with its references to the serious, indignant pose of a miffed schoolgirl and Wallraff on the one hand, and the more playful "contrived naïveté" associated with a documentarist of a more satirical bent—Moore—on the other.

Roughly a decade later, when the story briefly reappeared in the Danish news, Fredensborg responded to this criticism, calling it unfairly personal. Notably, he highlighted the exposé component of his own story as if style and performance of professional ethos were irrelevant:

> My article was an attempt to open a debate about cliquishness in the film industry, after which [Frank Piasecki Poulsen] as a friend of the fired film consultant threatened me with what I could only interpret as a beating . . . It was the messenger, I, who seemed to be the problem—not the way the duties of the office [of film consultant] were performed.[30]

Surely, however, matters of ethos and style are all-important. The serious and injured tone of this comment is also apparent in the magazine story itself, where it coexists with Gonzo features that pull in an opposite, playful direction. The ambivalence is worth investigating to uncover the ethical compromises that are made and displayed at the textual level.

Ethos and Style of Engagement

The term style is used here in an extended sense inspired by Nicotra's practice-oriented use of the phrase "style of engagement."[31] Nicotra refers not to literary journalism practices but to rhetorical critics' reading practices when introducing responsiveness as a form of agency: a practice driven by fascination and characterized by a readiness to be affected and transformed by a given textual encounter. This way of approaching a text resembles an immersive approach to reporting. As a responsive reader, Nicotra says, one spends a prolonged time with the text, approaching it "not entirely innocently but also not yet knowing what such an encounter might produce."[32] She develops her argument by comparing such responsiveness with a readiness to be seduced, an approach that makes it necessary to "actively . . . open the self to alterity, whether that alterity be a text, a communication situation, or something else."[33] In this perspective, literary journalism may be viewed as a rhetorical discipline defined as ready exposure and response to the particulars of a given situation.

Indeed, with immersion as an established key component of literary journalism, such readiness for long-term, potentially transformative exposure to particulars seems integral to its ethos.[34] When Hermann describes "ethnographically informed accounts from the margins," she highlights the recognizable "time-consuming research and carefully crafted narratives" of "not the urgent and immediate but the quotidian."[35] Moreover, interestingly, she points to a temporal tipping point or reorientation in these stories, "a changed set of attitudes and beliefs borne out of prolonged immersive experiences."[36] The "prolonged reporting time," says Hermann, "helps journalists reevaluate and abandon their expectations in favor of locally situated perspectives."[37] It is this capacity for reorientation (Hermann) or subjective transformation (Nicotra) that arguably counts as a hallmark of literary journalism ethos and which René Fredensborg tentatively invokes.

As noted earlier, Kristensen's work shows how cultural journalists distinguish themselves by being immersed or otherwise closely intertwined with sources by default,[38] which requires extra caution when they venture—as Fredensborg did—to share their personal experiences and expose certain groups. In a sidebar titled "Undercover, or Just Drawing on Past Experience?" in

his handbook *Immersion*, Conover has a pragmatic take on such situations. When his students decide to write a story based on their immersion somewhere, basically turning their memoirs into a kind of undercover reporting, Conover advises that they explicitly anonymize sources who might unwittingly find themselves included in a story, so they "won't feel ambushed."[39] Next, he advises the students to return to those sources to reveal their professional intention and do additional reporting.[40] Fredensborg did neither, so his sources probably would have felt ambushed, his readers might have turned against him because of that, and that could have been the end of the analysis. One could simply tell Fredensborg to follow Conover's advice next time:

> Remember that the reader of your work . . . becomes complicit in your deception. So in advance, if possible, pause now and then to consider: How will this make me look? Like an empath? Or like an asshole?[41]

Still, Fredensborg's decision to write his story against what would generally be considered sound professional advice generated useful material in terms of studying how a literary journalist works in practice to legitimize his approach. How does Fredensborg work in his writing to gain the attention and trust of first, publishers and editors, and second, readers?

Of Kramer's oft-quoted eight "breakable rules for literary journalists," the fourth relates style to the reporter's presentation of self through the notion of voice: "*Literary journalists write in 'intimate voice,' informal, frank, human, and ironic*."[42] The qualities of "frank, human, and ironic" seem to anticipate the ambiguity at play in Fredensborg's writing. On one hand, the literary journalist is perceived as a straightforward and honest person who strives, in Jim Boylan's words, for "fidelity to the truth as the writer [him- or herself] sees it."[43] On the other hand, the literary journalist is perceived as ironic, that is to say, playful, and somewhat guarded, disclaiming or relativizing the aforementioned subjective truth.

These two conflicting qualities of style sometimes present themselves in sequence according to a narrative logic—a particular version of Hermann's reorientation principle—where irony gradually gives way to gravity. The reporter pursues an idea for a story and is initially excited and amused by it, but then faces challenges along the way that complicate the engagement. On a large scale, such a dynamic may be recognized in Norah Vincent's book-length story of the year she disguised herself as a man, immersing herself in male communities with an excitement that ethical concerns gradually cancel. Her actions eventually damage her mental health, which invites a follow-up story of immersion in mental institutions.[44] Rather than being responsive to their sources, journalists become vulnerable in a literal, hurting sense, and

while dedication is difficult not to respect, the peculiar logic of literary journalists being too dedicated for their own good offers more of a paradox in terms of ethical appeal. An admirable professional trait becomes a human weakness and might still be appreciated as such, but when and to what extent does it serve as an excuse for unprofessional behavior?

Fredensborg's style of engagement evokes the image of an excited reporter under the influence of cultural and social forces and—sometimes—drugs.[45] He portrays himself as ready to play along, exposing himself unconditionally to input and impulses from the film community. Rather than deploying more value-laden terms such as excitement, passion, commitment, or dedication, the focus herein is on the notion and textual enactment of *responsiveness*. The term is meant to echo the previously mentioned rhetorical conception of literary journalism as a situated art of response that harbors the admirable quality of openness to learning and being affected on the one hand, as well as more questionable degrees of getting caught up or carried away on the other.

Fredensborg's Responsive Style: Actively Passive

Genre clues in the editorial framing of Fredensborg's article in *Ekko* immediately point in different directions. It is described as an "essay" in the online version, an "account" in the print magazine, and a personal story in both online and offline editorial leads. The latter is the most accurate, promising a first-person testimony of events presented in chronological order. What justifies the account and essay descriptions, however, with their promise of slightly more rigor and reflection, are the subtler, injured, or indignant stylistic aspects that appear on closer reading.

First and foremost, however, the article presents itself as a high-powered, satirical piece of Gonzo journalism with clear references (see Figure 1) to Thompson's work by way of the "Fear and Loathing . . ." title as well as the cartoon illustrations and the enumerating, associative style of the article summary.

Occasional cues in the text evoke Fredensborg's Gonzo persona, too, signaling that he takes joy in the adventure as well as in the writing itself. First, informal English phrases are thrown into Danish sentences, such as "*Off we go!*" and "He spots me as a new, hopeful film director *dude*."[46] Second, there are original, field-specific plays on words and images, such as "I'll be getting great greasy feedback by the liver pâté buffet." Third, idiosyncratic, disproportionate references are evoked in Fredensborg's mind, for instance, during a staff meeting at the film company:

> "We shall have to select among all the producers out here," [said one of the top-notch directors]. Select. As in selection? As in the classic handbook *Doctors from Hell: The Horrific Account of Nazi Experiments on Humans*?[47]

Figure 1. "Fear and Loathing in and around Avedøre," as illustrated and introduced by *Ekko*, June 24, 2011. The illustration is by Jenz Koudahl. The article summary reads: "A hopeful filmmaking debutant's personal story of his encounter with the hierarchy, hypocrisy, and false hopes of the television and film industry. Complete with well-intended toasts, a massive high, and the notorious problem of the Danish film business: incestuous cliquishness."[48]

These playful remarks and affective interpretations reinforce Fredensborg's outsider position and seem designed mainly to amuse his readers. Indeed, the idiosyncratic language choices become the main way for Fredensborg to take responsibility for his story because they stand out as his own.[49] This happens, however, at the expense of empathy with his co-workers (eventually his sources),[50] because he keeps his thoughts to himself quite consistently while immersed and blames this on feeling starstruck and alienated. In this way, the second-order narrative becomes dominant. Because Fredensborg loses his struggle to fit in, he never gets to share a first-order insider perspective which, of course, underscores a central point of his story. Still, one central scene indicates that at least one prominent member of the film community trusts him as an insider, evoking the plot of a conventional initiation story.[51] The scene is also central in terms of reporting because it eventually serves as an exposé of misconduct on the part of a film consultant who appears in the scene:

> The consultant . . . asks me if I want something for the nose. I just have to make sure that we are on the same page.
> — *Something for the nose*?

> "Yes, it's some really good stuff that I inherited. Come on, let's line up."
>
> We go into the men's room. Jack is cutting and sniffing . . . Jack lines up coke on the back of his hand and offers me his little, personal vacuum cleaner tube. I put my nose down and snort [the cocaine] off his hand. A little too quickly. Jack can probably tell that I am some sort of rookie *also* when it comes to coke.
>
> . . . Jack and I end up in my hotel room. I wake up to the view of an empty coke bag and a tape recorder with recordings of me and the consultant . . . me singing to him in falsetto . . . us having an [indecipherable] conversation . . .[52]

In light of Fredensborg's aforementioned bonding with his readers, it can be argued that the passage is ironic: his feigned naïveté ("I have to make sure . . .") invites the consultant to become a victim of this irony, to expose himself and make his intentions explicit. A level of irony may also be read into Fredensborg's weak-willed way of submitting to social pressure as he extends his role as apprentice in filmmaking and fundraising to this case of illegal drug use. By claiming an amateur persona ("some sort of rookie") who does not know the local jargon and practices, he performs a remarkably passive responsiveness; the true insiders are featured as active agents who become responsible for his education or his socialization into their line of business on all fronts. This distribution of roles is further stressed by the piece of technical information that Fredensborg is allowed to use the consultant's personal instrument—a metal straw for sniffing the cocaine that qualifies in the context as the gear of a comparatively skilled professional, that is, a habitual drug user.

What works against the reading of the piece as ironic, however, is the victimization of Fredensborg, which is implied throughout the text. It forms the confessional, injured, and indignant strand of his story. The following passages and sentence fragments, sampled from the article and including its opening lines, are presented to illustrate how the strand is presented textually:

> It isn't even my idea. To apply for funding for a documentary . . . I really just happen to be . . . on a hazy day . . . [Engel, producer at the production company Zentropa,] reads my [Facebook] update . . . —and pop! I have one foot in the film business.
>
> #
>
> [Klarlund, director at Zentropa] is the first to warn me . . . "This business is sick. It will destroy you . . . !" He turns out to be right . . . but I am busy coming to terms with my starstrucked-ness . . . Again and again I rehearse the line in my head . . . but never muster the courage to [crack my joke] . . .
>
> #
>
> I assume . . . I keep quiet . . . I toast along with them . . .
>
> #

> I am even asked to . . . [My producer] makes clear to me . . . a newcomer like me . . .
>
> #
>
> The Danish Film Institute knows this, TV2 knows this. While I myself slowly learn.
>
> #
>
> . . . we are sent to . . . We are asked to . . . I am wrong . . . I learn . . . I try . . . he explains to me . . . he makes clear to me . . . [We] end up . . . My producer thinks I am a good boy . . . [Judge and program director Roland] has explained to us several times . . . [Film consultant Haslund-Christensen] encourages me . . . [Film consultant Jack] encourages me . . . I am allowed to . . . all I want is . . . "[53]

Despite the story's retrospective narrative mode, reflection is kept to a minimum, and despite his center-stage position, Fredensborg shows no "first-person major showmanship."[54] His continued use of inner thoughts, passive forms, and the dative case to position himself stand out; he is consistently acted upon, nudged, and told what to do, and in the final remark, any hint of irony, bold playfulness, and excitement about his style of engagement is gone. Instead, his hurting outsider position is cemented. He ultimately claims to have become the victim of the community to which he had trustingly opened himself and is, in that sense, a victim of his own responsive style of engagement:

> [When I tell people that I'm writing this article, most of them warn me about coming across as bitter, to which I usually reply:] "I'm not bitter. All I want is to tell the truth [about the Danish TV and film community] on behalf of all those who are left out.[55]

The strong, mixed reactions from Fredensborg's readers to his article are not surprising. That he subscribes to the ethos of a literary journalist who is almost painfully sensitive to the communities and identities he is investigating is bound to become offensive in light of his simultaneous, casual demonstration of a publicist's power to expose disruptive events. His excited and amused Gonzo poses and familiar persona indicate that he takes personal pleasure in his work and may get carried away, and when this style of engagement and its casual performance has real consequences for people around him, what might have been admirable and entertaining can easily appear careless and malicious.

Mind the Responsive Styles of Engagement

Because it has both artistic and journalistic potential, literary journalism is a professional field in which the dynamics of inspiration and emulation are at work across both generations and nations. Therefore, literary journalism

studies should pay attention to journalistic practices that emerge on a smaller scale alongside more iconic examples. Fredensborg's example makes clear that the ethos of both the broader literary and the specific Gonzo journalism traditions are actively claimed by journalists and evoked by their editors and readers in the framing of stories. That the two paradigms serve as reference points to establish, defend, and attack the aspirations and accomplishments of a piece of contemporary cultural journalism in Denmark suggests they are well established and operative.

Furthermore, as Kristensen argues, the values and practices of literary journalism and cultural journalism—which have been referred to herein as a shared ethos—are filtering into the mainstream journalism that the literary journalism paradigm has traditionally defined itself against.[56] A growing number of journalists are working to transform their style and persona from one assignment to the next and making their individual profiles consistent and relevant in their freelance careers. In the field of arts and culture in Denmark, this means positioning oneself in a tightly knit network of cultural actors, which appears to be part of the reason Fredensborg continues to invoke the Gonzo ethos. It destabilizes his tentative role of cultural-elite insider while giving some authority and artistic license to his offensive deployment and distortion of the literary journalist's responsive stance.

Fredensborg's immersion in and around Avedøre exposes cliquishness in the Danish film industry and causes a film consultant to lose his position. The latter happens as a result of behavior that is not much different from the behavior of the reporter himself, whose story, however, is nonetheless accepted and published. This raises some questions. Does immersion excuse the reporter's conduct? To what extent does the Gonzo logic and aesthetic make up for this behavior? And does it matter whether the journalist ends up looking, in Conover's terms, like an empath or an asshole?

Surely, (un)professional conduct and its justifications are important to readers who are being addressed in an "intimate voice" as they accompany a literary journalist through a story of a culture or community. When performing a responsive style of engagement, a journalist engages his or her audience-companions' sensibilities and sets an example for social interaction. Ideally, then, readers of literary journalism may open themselves to subjective transformation as Fredensborg did, allowing the story to affect or seduce them. This shared ethos of literary journalism stays credible, however, only if its particular enactments are studied and discussed continuously with attention also to less than iconic examples like Fredensborg's, whose immediate potential for seduction proves less than ideal on a closer reading.

Responsiveness as a concept enables discussions that recognize both the

strengths and weaknesses of practitioners who present themselves as dedicated or passionate literary journalists, not in terms of an intuitive, reader-based judgment of character or a question of taste, but as something identifiable at the textual level. A more elaborate formal theory of literary journalism might evolve around responsiveness as a productively ambiguous cardinal virtue that entails both an invested, seductive posture on the one hand and a passive, helpless one on the other.

One important focus point when studying the responsive style is the basic textual positioning of the first-person narrator in a passive form and in the dative case. This starting position can sustain a potentially bold and charming readiness to become immersed and to invite the company and influence of others. Such immersion may then unfold textually as the reporter plays with words and images that are drawn from a specific encounter with a given field or community, exposing a culture and its influence on the reporter. While potentially entertaining, this same style of engagement comes with a built-in disclaimer because it can act as an excuse for a reporter to be impressionable and irresponsible, which is surely worthy of critical attention. By concentrating on the ambivalence of a responsive style of engagement at the textual level, the present study has taken an important cue from Wilson and discussed immersion as a complex form of engagement rather than an in-or-out, pass-or-fail enterprise.[57] The study may also help challenge and qualify offhand characterizations of literary journalists as charming and overly dedicated, and therefore immune to criticism; or of Gonzo journalists as divisive figures who one must either love or hate—even if the specifically *passive*-responsive journalist seems to ask mainly for the latter.

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Notes

[1] Rothstein and Stolle, "Introduction: Social Capital in Scandinavia," 1; Sønderskov and Dinesen, "Trusting the State, Trusting Each Other?," 187.

[2] Kristensen, "Churnalism, Cultural (Inter)Mediation and Sourcing in Cultural Journalism," 2171.

[3] Kristensen, "The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism," 10–31; Collins, "From Magazines to Newsprint," 209–10.

[4] Tulloch and Keeble, "Introduction: Mind the Gaps," 5.

[5] Wilson, "Immersion Journalism and the Second Order Narrative," 347 (emphases in original).

[6] Moestrup, "Performing the Persona," 7.

[7] Jensen, "Ham vi ikke vil lege med" [The guy we don't want to play with], sec. 3, 16.

[8] Fredensborg, "Mit (sølle) liv som aktivist" [My (miserable) life as an activist], sec. 1, 8. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Danish are my own).

[9] Fredensborg, "Frygt og lede i Avedøre og omegn" [Fear and loathing in and around Avedøre], 50–56. Avedøre, a southwestern suburb of Copenhagen, is the home of—and in this context synonymous with—the film city of Avedøre, the "Danish Hollywood" that houses several television and film companies, including Zentropa, which was founded in 1992 by Peter Aalbæk Jensen and internationally award-winning director Lars von Trier. See Filmbyen Avedøre Studios, http://www.kulturarv.dk/1001fortaellinger/en_GB/filmbyen-avedoere-studios.

[10] Fredensborg, "Mit (sølle) liv som activist," sec. 1, 8.

[11] Rasmussen, "Stop den mand," [Stop that man], sec. 1, 35.

[12] Andersen, "Vi er stolte af René Fredensborg" [We Are Proud of René Fredensborg].

[13] Andersen.

[14] Andersen.

[15] Elkjær, "Gratis." *Nyhedsavisen* was published by 365 Media Scandinavia Ltd from 2006 through 2008.

[16] Phillips, "From Major to Minor," 391.

[17] Mosser, "What's Gonzo about Gonzo Journalism?," 88.

[18] See Isager, "Playful Imitation at Work," 78–96; Alexander and Isager, *Fear and Loathing Worldwide*.

[19] Kremmer, "Gonzo Down Under," 13.

[20] Fredensborg, *Hønsehunde* [Bird Dogs: Novel].

[21] Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

[22] Cf., respectively, Coward, "Confessional Journalism," 91–101; Kristensen, "The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism," 10–31.

[23] Isager, "Hvem vil være wannabe?," 137–48.

[24] Moestrup, "Performing the Persona," 107–109.

[25] Kristensen, "Churnalism, Cultural (Inter)Mediation and Sourcing in Cultural Journalism," 2171.

[26] In October 2020, Fredensborg aired a podcast series, "En Gonzo siger good-

bye" [A Gonzo says goodbye], https://podcasts.apple.com/dk/podcast/en-gonzo-siger-goodbye/id1534736890. Working in collaboration with a journalist colleague, Anders Christiansen, they discussed Fredensborg's peculiar media profile and history, allegedly in preparation for a farewell performance at a Copenhagen theater.

[27] Thompson, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, 18.

[28] Larsen, "–Du er en klam lille lort."

[29] Steen, "Aflever pengene tilbage, Fredensborg!" [Give back the money, Fredensborg!].

[30] Hoff and Christensen, "Filminstituttet ansætter kontroversiel instruktør."

[31] Nicotra, "The Seduction of Samuel Butler," 49-52.

[32] Nicotra, 39.

[33] Nicotra, 45.

[34] Wilson, "Immersion Journalism and the Second-Order Narrative," 345.

[35] Hermann, "The Temporal Tipping Point," 493. See Kristensen, "The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism," 10–31.

[36] Hermann, "The Temporal Tipping Point," 493.

[37] Hermann, 500.

[38] Kristensen, "Churnalism, Cultural (Inter)Mediation and Sourcing in Cultural Journalism," 2168–86.

[39] Conover, *Immersion: A Writer's Guide*, 109–110.

[40] Conover, 110.

[41] Conover, 108.

[42] Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," 28 (emphasis in original).

[43] Boylan, quoted in Sims, preface to *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, ix.

[44] Vincent, *Self-Made Man: My Year Disguised as a Man*; Vincent, *Voluntary Madness: My Year Lost and Found in the Loony Bin*.

[45] Hunter S. Thompson and other journalists in the Gonzo tradition have specifically developed responses to drugs both stylistically and as component of immersion. See, for instance, Alexander, " 'The Right Kind of Eyes,' " 19–36; van Belle, " 'Among Madmen and Crooks,' " 123-42.

[46] Fredensborg, "Frygt og lede i Avedøre og omegn," 51. Italics added here to indicate the English phrases that appeared in the original Danish text.

[47] Fredensborg, 51, referring to Vivien Spitz's 2005 *Doctors from Hell: The Horrific Account of Nazi Experiments on Humans* (Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications).

[48] Fredensborg, "Frygt og lede i Avedøre og omegn" [Fear and loathing in and around Avedøre].

[49] For a development of this argument in a different case study, see Isager, "Loathing in Southern Denmark," 111–22.

[50] Phillips, "From Major to Minor," 389–91.

[51] Wilson, "Immersion Journalism and the Second-Order Narrative," 349.

[52] Fredensborg, "Frygt og lede i Avedøre og omegn" [Fear and loathing in and around Avedøre], 54 (emphasis in the original).

[53] Fredensborg, 51–56.

[54] Phillips, "From Major to Minor," 389–91.

[55] Fredensborg, "Frygt og lede i Avedøre og omegn" [Fear and loathing in and around Avedøre], 56.

[56] Kristensen, "The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism," 10–31.

[57] Wilson, "Immersion Journalism and the Second-Order Narrative," 351.

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Image of Martin Kongstad by Petra Kleis

Theatricality, Body, Voice, Spatiality: Applying Performance Analysis to Persona-Driven Literary Journalism

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Abstract: This inquiry explores the benefits of applying performance analysis to the study of journalism practices where the use and staging of the journalist's persona is a fundamental literary strategy. The focus of the analysis is a case study of persona performances of Danish novelist, food critic, and cultural journalist Martin Kongstad. In his persona-driven journalism and criticism, Kongstad makes use of literary strategies such as multiple voices, alter ego, dramatization of written text, and a blending of fictional characters with real-life sources. By proposing a framework that draws on concepts from performance studies, this study demonstrates how literary strategies adapted and developed across platforms can be examined fruitfully using performance analysis.

Keywords: persona-driven journalism – contemporary literary journalism – performance analysis – Martin Kongstad – food reviews – Denmark

The media environment of the early twenty-first century is in many ways a precarious and unstable work market[1] that challenges journalists to maintain a broad presence across various media to reinforce their voices in the media landscape. This is particularly the case for those who practice cultural journalism, where many practitioners have freelance contracts[2] and continually need to make themselves known. Some of these practitioners stage their own personalities to such an extent that it makes sense to identify the work they do as persona-driven cultural journalism.[3] The approach has been defined as "journalism and criticism where the performance of the journalist's or critic's personality is a fundamental part of the media text."[4] Persona-driven cultural journalism is not just a matter of being subjective, using a textual "I," or applying a Gonzo-style approach. Rather, the approach involves a profound and diverse staging of the journalist's persona across media, platforms, and time. The persona-driven approach, then, is the sum of the journalist's work, some of which is based on literary strategies in ways explored in this study.

Today, the world of literary journalism involves many media forms and platforms. The practitioners of contemporary literary journalism have an expanded digital toolbox with which to build their journalistic practices. That toolbox includes the written word as well as sound, visual, and interactive elements, all facilitated by social media platforms that increase interactivity. Dowling has demonstrated how digital innovations have enriched literary journalism, especially in the contemporary, second wave of digital narratives,[5] while Jacobson, Marino, and Gutsche have argued that digital tools are the "driving force behind a new period of literary journalism."[6] Furthermore, first-person narrative has gained renewed momentum in the digital era. As Phillips notes, "First-person articles of all kinds, from personal essays to op-eds to literary journalism, attract clicks and shares."[7] However, few researchers have studied the cross-media use of the first-person narrative. The present study examines how a performance analysis approach can fruitfully be applied when studying persona-driven journalism practices across media.

Danish journalist, critic, and novelist Martin Kongstad is the focus of this case study, which seeks to demonstrate how Kongstad can be interpreted as an *overflow persona* in several ways. The term *overflow* has been chosen because it captures how Kongstad's literary and artistic practices spill over to his journalism and criticism practices. Kongstad often mixes the two spheres, applying literary strategies when practicing cultural journalism. First, Kongstad uses different media (radio, text, and social media) to stage his persona. Second, he employs literary strategies that include using multiple voices, applying an alter ego, dramatizing the written text, and mixing fictional characters with

real-life sources in his journalistic practice. Third, he works both as a novelist and a critic/journalist, often blending the two worlds. And last, he explicitly stages himself as an overflow persona. An example of this is his acting as both a novelist and a journalist in a written reportage from the Frankfurt Book Fair. Before embarking on the analysis of his work, the theoretical and conceptual framework will be outlined.

Persona and Performance

The theoretical framework for the study involves a media aesthetic approach that draws on concepts stemming from performance studies. The media aesthetic approach offers a conceptualization of media that accentuates the need to explore the uses of a medium and find media materialities based on use, rather than expecting numerous media characteristics.[8] The academic field of performance studies offers a theoretical framework suitable for a study that investigates the multitude of doings inherent in media practices. The two key concepts guiding this analysis are *persona* and *performance*.

Auslander argues that persona can be defined as a contextualized self-construct that suits the specific performance situation and is not necessarily the same as an individual's self-presentation in other contexts. Understanding this last point is important to grasping Auslander's distinction between the persona concept and the many instances of self-presentation in which a person engages. The persona is a tool that is used "to serve the needs of the performance."[9] Performance can be understood as "restored behavior."[10] With his practice-based approach, Schechner has argued that "[r]estored behavior is living behavior treated as a film director treats a strip of film"; it is "me behaving as if I am someone else."[11] This is not to be interpreted as a personality that someone assumes, but "as if there were multiple 'me's' in each person,"[12] which makes the approach suitable for considering a persona as created from a multitude of doings.

Schechner also highlights an important notion for guiding the analysis in this study: that is, the "focus is on the 'repertory,' namely, what people do in the activity of their doing it."[13] In other words, this analysis focuses on the actual creation and use of a persona and examines various practices where creating and using a persona is accomplished.

The notion of "repertory" stems from the work of performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, whose distinction between *repertoire* and *archive* seems useful in unpacking the performance of persona. Taylor notes that an archive refers to "supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones)," while the repertoire consists of "embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)."[14] The repertoire is any action that

outlines, establishes, manifests, or uses a persona, whether it be a particular interview style, a certain writing style, a personal appearance, the disclosing of details from the author's private life, a certain bodily behavior, and so on, while the archive is the container in which these repertoires are collected and form a somewhat tangible form. In the context of this study, archive would translate to a mediated product such as a print newspaper article, a radio show, or a social media update. In the persona context, the archive would consist of a repertoire of doings that showcase the persona of the doer.

Four Useful Concepts

To engage with the case, the performance analysis draws on four different concepts from performance studies, each of which sheds light on different aspects of the doings of the persona. Performance analysis is an interpretive, eclectic approach rooted entirely in the spectator's point of view,[15] meaning that it is by engaging with the material in an explorative and abductive manner that it is possible to conceptualize the analytical approach.[16] Abductive exploration of the empirical material led to an analytical conceptualization that consists of four concepts that enable the analyst to grasp the multitude of doings in the empirical material. The concepts and brief definitions follow. For a more extensive discussion of the concepts and an extended analytical model, see Moestrup.[17]

The first concept is *theatricality*, which addresses a quality that relates to the "world of theatre."[18] According to Féral, theatricality is what happens when material, which is rooted in material reality, enters a relationship with the imaginary, and theatricalization often calls attention to whatever is being theatricalized.[19] As Féral points out, theatricality is by no means limited to the theater but should rather be understood as a possible manifestation that can come from both the doer and the spectator of an action. Féral does not locate theatricality within an object, space, or agent but rather sees theatricality as "the result of a perceptual dynamics linking the onlooker with someone or something that is looked at."[20] This linking can occur if the agent declares an intention to act or if the spectator transforms something into a spectacular object. Theatricality is a concept that is useful when dealing with elements that are not considered theatrical but which can be deemed an attribute of the doer's theatricality. When looking for theatricality in material, it is useful to ask the following questions: What has been done in journalistic practice to make it feel like theater?

The second concept is *body*. The performance analysis of persona includes a multitude of doings, including bodily behavior. Here, a distinction between *bodily exteriority* and *bodily interiority*, based on the work of David Graver,

is useful.[21] Bodily exteriority covers elements such as appearance, ways of dressing, gesture, manner, body language, posture, and verbal utterances, while bodily interiority includes factors such as emotion, attitude, opinion, thought, belief, and life approach or outlook. For instance, an aspect of bodily interiority, such as an emotion, can find an exterior expression in a gesture or a verbal utterance. Showcasing a public self by repeatedly dressing in the same kind of attire can suggest a certain approach to life. The word interiority should not be understood to mean a kind of essence. Similarly, exteriority should not be understood as fake or more constructed than interiority. Both exteriority and interiority are likely to resonate between the stable, the fluid, and the constructed. When looking for body in empirical material, it is useful to ask the following questions: How is the body used in the journalistic material? Which elements and practices evidence the interiority and exteriority of the agent's body as it appears to others?

The third concept, *voice*, has a long tradition in literary journalism studies that shows "that an author is at work," as Sims phrases it.[22] Kramer writes that voice can be understood as the ways a writer presents or represents him or herself to the reader.[23] In the context of this study, voice addresses what could be called the position or point of view of the agent. Drawing on Auslander's work[24] and Graver's outline of the actor's seven kinds of presence,[25] the concept of voice addresses the multitude of possible first-person gestalts. These gestalts could, for instance, be a confessional "I," where details from one's private life are shared, or a character-like mobilization that functions within a given framework and presents itself in specific ways to promote a narrative. The first-person gestalt could also be a conversational voice manifesting itself through verbal interaction with other voices, even if these are fictional voices. Applying this way of thinking about voice makes it possible to unpack the different ways personas can assume various appearances or ways of being present, depending on factors such as theme, genre, platform, and media. This approach to understanding voice also equips the analyst to better comprehend alter egos and the general playful adaptation of identity that some personas may use. When looking for voice in the empirical material, it is useful to ask the following questions: What kind of voice is being used? From which position does the agent speak to us? What is the function of this voice in the performance of journalism?

Fourth and finally, the concept of *spatiality* is useful when examining how personas make use of space and how spaces are part of the manifestation of persona. In his pivotal work from 1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau outlines his theory of space and the distinction between place and space. De Certeau argues that place is often a physical location understood as

an ordered structure, while space is created by the very practices of living; in other words, space is practiced place.[26] Drawing on the work of de Certeau, it makes sense to differentiate between what could be labeled "media space" and what could be labeled "life space," and thereby investigate the relations between these two spaces. In the following example, space and place intertwine as life space—a geographic location such as a specific house or street—is a space that the persona's body can use as a performative scene/stage. The geographic location can also be a space located inside a media space, such as the frame of a print article or the mediated space of a radio show. Thus, it can be argued that what is called life space is somewhat like de Certeau's notion of place,[27] whereas media space is similar to de Certeau's notion of space (a practiced place). When looking for spatiality in the empirical material, it is useful to ask questions such as: What kind of space is present in the journalistic material? How does the agent use this space? What is the relationship between life space and media space?

As demonstrated in the analysis that follows, theatricality, body, voice, and spatiality overlap somewhat and function best when applied together, thereby allowing the analyst to decipher the literary strategies that are at work in the persona-driven, cross-media practice of the case. The four concepts are thus used to examine how Kongstad's persona manifests within his work and across media.

The Analysis: Context and Case

Martin Kongstad has no formalized education but has worked in the cultural industry since the late 1980s, beginning as a music critic and music reporter. While working as a journalist for prestigious Danish publications, he also worked as a copywriter for several large Danish companies, as a drummer in different bands, as a writer for theater and variety shows, and as a screen actor in various productions. Kongstad has published short stories as well as three novels, some of which are narrated in the voice of his alter ego, Mikkel Vallin—a voice that Kongstad also uses in some of his cultural journalism.[28]

Kongstad's current occupations include novelist and journalist. The latter includes food reviewing for the national weekly newspaper, *Weekendavisen*, and hosting the radio show *Bearnaise er Dyrenes Konge* (*Bearnaise Is the King of Beasts*), which first aired on Radio24syv and, later, on the online media, *Heartbeats*, and the podcast platform, Podimo.[29] It is important to understand that Kongstad's persona performance is rooted in the media for which he works. Strategies and possibilities available at an institutional level affect the individual agent and the scope for practices. Knowing and understanding Kong-

stad's two institutional affiliations is a necessary precursor to exploring his performance personas.

Weekendavisen (The weekend newspaper) and Radio24syv (Radio24seven) are both branded as personality-driven media. *Weekendavisen* is an intellectual paper aimed at a high-end market that once carried the tagline, "The Newspaper of Personalities." But the paper now incorporates a promotional strategy that is rooted in the branding of individual journalists. This can be seen, for instance, in the weekly newsletter emailed to subscribers a few days before *Weekendavisen*'s publication. The newsletter is structured as a promotional text highlighting articles and specific reporters, journalists, and critics.[30] At *Weekendavisen*, Kongstad's cultural reporting includes interviews with authors as well as food reviews.

The national Danish radio station Radio24syv, which went to air on November 1, 2011, emphasized three keywords in its strategy: take an *experimental* approach to radio, deliver radio programming that gives listeners an *experience*, and allow *new kinds of voices* to be aired.[31] These three keywords all carry an aesthetic ambition, making it possible to interpret the radio station and its programming as a literary journalism project that seeks to be creative and performative, as discussed by Kristensen.[32] At Radio24syv, Kongstad hosted *Bearnaise er Dyrenes Konge*, which provides the first example of Kongstad's use of literary techniques in his persona-driven journalism.

A few remarks about the gathering and selection of the empirical material for analysis are in order. Dealing with the oeuvre of a case that spans several decades required choosing a selection of material to analyze. The purpose of the current analysis is not to undertake a comprehensive analysis of Kongstad's practices, but to investigate persona performances of the case. Finding the most profound and differentiated uses of persona that reflect different media, genres, and time points in Kongstad's career provided the criteria for the purposive sample in the analysis that follows.

Performing a Review as a Literary Strategy

Martin Kongstad hosted *Bearnaise er Dyrenes Konge* roughly every week from May 31, 2014, through May 1, 2020.[33] The fifty-five-minute show is structured around a restaurant meal attended by the host, Kongstad, and an invited guest. After the meal, Kongstad writes a review of the restaurant, which is read aloud on air by a professional actor. This read-aloud review is combined with short dialogue clips recorded on location at the restaurant where Kongstad converses with his guest but also includes longer monologues where Kongstad reflects on different aspects of life, such as loneliness, sexuality, and his relationship with his father.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the radio show is the read-aloud performance of the food review, which is an example of theatricality. While audiences are accustomed to hearing novels and poetry read aloud and performed as live literature onstage, that is not the case with food reviews. Kongstad's reviews are read by professional actor Claes Bang, internationally renowned for his work in *The Square* (2017), *The Burnt Orange Heresy* (2019), and the Netflix series *Dracula* (2020).[34] Bang's voice provides intimacy. He speaks with what feels like heightened emphasis, giving Kongstad's work an air of authority. This extra weight is probably perceived as augmented because it takes place within a conversationally driven show where the other voices have more everyday qualities, with attendant mumbles, pauses, detours, and loops. The voice also conveys a level of familiarity that is partly due to the space the voice occupies. Again, there is a contrast between Bang's voice and the other voices in the show, which are all recorded on location, such as on the way to the restaurant or inside the restaurant during the meal. The recordings include the ambient sounds of the restaurant: knives touching plates, wine glasses clinking during toasts, or the distant chatting of the other guests in the restaurant. The reading-aloud voice is recorded in a studio that is devoid of any other sound, but in post-production, some ambient sound from the restaurant is added.

The review read by Bang is clearly not the voice of Kongstad reading aloud, as two voices are often heard temporally close to each other in the shows. However, because Bang reads aloud Kongstad's written food review in a show conceptualized by Kongstad, and because this performance is repeated over and over in the shows hosted by Kongstad, the listener comes to think of the Bang voice as part of Kongstad's persona.

The Bang voice is like a bodily extension of Kongstad—an alternative voice that listeners come to think of as an alter-ego voice. It is his way of speaking when reviewing. This kind of theatricality in Kongstad's food review resonates with Bombaci's work on performative criticism in its self-referential nature, where the work being evaluated and criticized often gets put to one side and is sometimes overshadowed by the critic's self-referentiality.[35] The theatrical aspect of this stylistic choice also provides some overemphasis to the review; it becomes a distinct element separated from the rest of the show and emphasizes the importance of the review. By separating the review from the conversation and dressing it in theatricality, Kongstad causes the review to stand out as something special, something to pay attention to. It acquires literary qualities, just as when an author reads aloud an excerpt from a book.

Using Multiple Voices

Another recurring strategy in Kongstad's work, both as a novelist and a journalist, is his use of multiple voices. In several food reviews, Kongstad adopts the voice of his alter ego, Mikkel Vallin, who is also the protagonist in two of Kongstad's novels. In the novels, Vallin is a somewhat struggling food critic based in Copenhagen (just like the author), fond of expensive wines (perhaps like the author), and divorced (unlike the author, who is married and has three children).[36] Using a fictional character as the author and voice of a review allows Kongstad to introduce elements from a fictional universe into the world of cultural criticism. Former *New York Times* literary critic Michiko Kakutani similarly used voices that were different from her own in reviews[37] as a way to expand the aesthetic breadth of the genre. Applying the voice of an alter ego makes it possible for an author to speak in a different way. Vallin's voice, for example, uses more irony and is more cynical than Kongstad's voice.

In a 2011 print review of the Copenhagen restaurant Fishmarket, Kongstad dines with his alter ego.[38] The two voices clash in the review, not only on an aesthetic level but also in the content. Vallin accuses Kongstad of selling out because he had started doing more copywriting assignments for commercial companies instead of living solely off cultural criticism, as Vallin does. In this text, Kongstad appears to engage at three levels. First, he reviews Fishmarket using traditional descriptive and evaluative sentences. Second, the text contains relational elements between Kongstad and Vallin that expand both the fictional universe (by allowing the alter ego to dine in real life with his maker) and the review itself (by allowing the review to enter the dialogue with a fictional text). Third, the text functions as a brief discussion on the value of critical writing vis-à-vis commercial writing. Kongstad defends copywriting as a style of writing that demands certain skills, not as something on which any cultural critic who needs quick and easy cash can embark.

Kongstad similarly uses voice creatively in other food reviews when he imagines his deceased friend Henrik is dining with him. Using a friendly voice, Kongstad adds at least two elements to the reviews: He establishes a dialogical dynamic in the review, and he highlights the social and conversational aspects of the meal (as is the case with the radio shows). Second, and more subtly, Kongstad writes an ongoing homage to a beloved friend who is no longer alive but whom Kongstad knows so well that he can incorporate him into the reviews by using dialogue that Henrik would probably have said in similar situations.

In a review published in *Information* on May 1, 2009, Kongstad does not

dine with Henrik but meets him (in his imagination, of course) immediately after having returned from a gourmet stay at the Hotel Louis C. Jacob in Hamburg.[39] The review is structured as one long conversation between the man who went abroad and the man who stayed at home. Kongstad describes the surroundings and food in detail, and Henrik adds small comments here and there, even correcting his friend when he mispronounces a word. Henrik states what he himself thinks of foie gras and the combination of Sauce Mousseline and white asparagus. Most importantly, he asks questions that propel the text forward. The questions make it possible for Kongstad to go from talking about a main course to talking about wine to talking about the price level of the hotel—all without creating a fragmentary text. Structuring the piece as a friendly conversation, Kongstad creates a voice of intimacy and honesty that not only carries the traditional ethos-driven statements that characterize his reviews but also feels personal because the reader is eavesdropping on a private conversation.

These multiple voices obviously belong to Kongstad and, as argued above, they help to manifest and clarify Kongstad's overflow persona. All the voices, whether the Bang voice on radio, the Vallin alter ego, or the voice of the deceased friend Henrik in print, provide building blocks in the foundation of persona.

Creating Spaces

The use and production of space calls for the distinction between life space and media space as outlined above. Life space signifies the geographical spaces and locations that exist in any given physical world, while media space signifies the same spaces as used by the persona in a mediated format. Kongstad's food-review radio show and podcast is recorded in part on location, and it makes sense to differentiate between two settings: the restaurant itself and the surroundings in which the restaurant is situated. Kongstad often uses the environment surrounding the restaurant, which he approaches in almost flaneur-like ways, to establish himself as a persona moving physically towards an existing life space where the activities of eating, speaking, and digesting will take place. This life space lays the foundation for the media space that is created when the (edited) conversation is combined with other elements, such as the read-aloud food review and monological elements performed by Kongstad when he approaches the restaurant.

In the episode that aired on Radio24syv on March 19, 2016, Kongstad deviates from the show's normal conversational structure and instead creates a program that is monologic and much more melancholic in nature.[40] "To be honest, it has been a really lousy week," is Kongstad's opening line, which

leads to an hour-long digression into themes such as solitude, friendship, childhood, divorce, and disappointment. The main structural component is not the meal, which Kongstad eats alone in the Copenhagen gourmet restaurant Kong Hans Kælder and takes up approximately twelve minutes of the total running time of fifty-five minutes, including the read-aloud review. Rather, the element that ties these different themes together is the way Kongstad creates media space from life spaces.

Early in the episode, Kongstad meets some of his friends, who are apparently going to have dinner at the apartment of some mutual friends in Copenhagen. For reasons not revealed, Kongstad has not been invited to the dinner, so he embarks on an evening of solitude in the streets and bars of Copenhagen. The recurring prop is his bicycle, which enables Kongstad to switch location both physically and in the narrative and, in this episode, it also emphasizes his solitude on this particular evening. At bars such as The Log Lady, Kongstad sits alone, but he is, in fact, there with his microphone, and through this technical device, the audience is there with him. Physically alone in the life space of the bar, he delivers a personal monologue into the microphone, which turns the bar into a media space that he can share with the audience and is brought to life through his persona-driven monologue.

In the successive monologues, Kongstad shares various aspects of his private life. The main theme is solitude, manifested through the lonely bar visits and emphasized through several telling details, such as when he receives a text message from the Kong Hans Kælder restaurant confirming a "table for 1 people." The system is simply not able to provide the information in the singular form.

Kongstad's creation of the media space displays the ongoing performance of his overflow persona. As the host of a food review show in which he reviews a restaurant and converses with a guest, Kongstad adopts a formalized, journalistic tone, fulfilling the repertoire of reviewing and interviewing. However, by creating the persona-performing space before reaching the restaurant, he situates himself not only as a food critic but also as a creative auteur who performs a narrative closely aligned with the literary sub-genre, autofiction. In this mode, Kongstad, as the author, enters a contract with the reader about being both autobiographical and fictional, which Behrendt has coined "the double contract."[41] This way of creating a character who is largely based on the author's own life experiences is a fundamental element in the literary genre of autofiction, but it is important to note that it is an aesthetic component, not necessarily a truth component.[42] Kongstad performs an autobiographical monologue using himself as a character; he is not giving an objective, journalistic report.

Kongstad also, on occasion and on social media, mixes the professional food critic with the human being. In 2018, Kongstad embarked on a diet, informing users on his personal Facebook profile, as well as the show's Facebook profile, about what kind of food he ate and how his weight evolved over time. The March 17 update looked like the image at right:

The photos displayed the status of the diet (the weight) and the reason for the status (the dish). The update read: "The Gazpacho diet—day 3. I used to weigh 83.1 kilos. Now I weigh 81.3 kilos." The text then switched to brief reflections and a recipe.[43]

The text can be read as an overflow between Kongstad's personal account and his review practice. It includes remarks from backstage about his weight and his plan to play football with friends, but it also includes a recipe and Kongstad's satirical speculation about what a pretentious restaurant would name this dish (that Kongstad invented). The update is just one in a series of updates structured in the same way, beginning with the pre-diet weight and then displaying the current weight. Each update involves the same performance and emphasizes Kongstad's ongoing mission to lose weight. The repetitiveness of the updates makes them readily recognizable as Kongstad updates. Furthermore, the updates accentuate Kongstad's public profile as a food critic and elucidate his persona by merging his personal ambitions and doings (losing weight, preparing a meal) with his professional review practice (describing the food in detail, naming the dish in a satirical way). The social media reports serve as examples of repertoires from two spheres merging into one archive.[44]

Performing an Explicit Overflow Character

In author interviews and cultural reporting for the Danish weekly, *Weekendavisen*, Kongstad has performed a more explicit overflow persona. Choosing to conduct author interviews can itself be seen as a way for Kongstad to stage himself within the sphere of literature and the practice of novel writing, which is the focus of most of the interviews.

In the 2013 newspaper piece, "Kunne man præsentere mig som Houellebecq light møder Fifty Shades?" (Could you pitch me as Houellebecq light meets Fifty Shades?),[45] Kongstad alternates between the personae of journalist and author. The article is a report from the Frankfurt Book Fair, one of the world's largest book industry events. Kongstad reports from the fair in a traditional journalistic way, using descriptive scenes as well as interviews with a literary agent and a publisher—once again fulfilling codes of practice such as fairness and balanced reporting.[46] However, Kongstad is present at the fair not because he is a journalist but because he is an author. The article begins by announcing that prior to the fair, Kongstad's new novel *Fryser Jeg* (*Am I Cold?: A Novel*) has been purchased for the English market.[47] He and his agent are now bound for Frankfurt, seeking to sell the novel for publication in other parts of the world.

Especially toward the end of the article, it becomes clear that Kongstad is an author, and he stages himself as an author rather than a reporter in the text. He is no longer a reporter but a novelist. This is evidenced in the dialogue between Kongstad and Danish crime writer Jussi Adler-Olsen, who has an international following:

> "You write extraordinarily well," says Jussi Adler-Olsen and informs me that he is using his only free time at the fair on me. "You have the right attitude. You know that it takes a toll on your private life and I respect you for that."[48]

Kongstad here refers to a dialogue that most likely took place at the fair, but it is clearly a dialogue about Kongstad as a novelist (receiving compliments from a successful novelist) rather than Kongstad as a journalist. Kongstad changes the way he situates himself in the piece, from an observing, commenting reporter to a novelist who is addressed by a fellow novelist. The change in voice also involves physical movement at the end of the article. Having received advice from Jussi Adler-Olsen, who suggests that Kongstad should try to reach out to a Scandinavian publisher, Kongstad writes:

> I walk directly towards the Norwegian publishers, circle around for a while and stop at one whom I find suitable. "Can I help you with anything?" a lady asks me. "I am Danish author looking for the right Norwegian publisher for my book."
>
> "All the editors just left."[49]

These lines conclude the piece and draw further attention to Kongstad as an author. Not only is the conversation directed toward him as an author, but in this part of the article, he is also physically moving through the book fair as an author rather than as a journalist. As the article's final lines, the passage also affects the reading of the previous lines and conveys the impres-

sion that Kongstad visited the book fair primarily because he wanted to sell his new novel in other territories, not because he had a journalistic piece to write for *Weekendavisen*. The exchange perhaps adds to the authority and personality of the piece as Kongstad presents himself as someone who is not only from the outside but also part of the literary game. On the other hand, the structure of the piece and the decision to act as both novelist and reporter also point to one of the downsides of being an "overflow" character. The last lines suggest Kongstad has not succeeded as a novelist to the extent that he had hoped. Perhaps this also indicates one of the pitfalls of the persona-driven approach. It is not possible to know for sure, but Kongstad's persona performances in journalism and criticism might be obstructing some of his ambitions as a novelist. Maybe he cannot be fully recognized as an author because of his work in journalism and criticism.

Conclusion

This study has examined how Martin Kongstad performs as an overflow persona by applying four literary strategies across diverse media forms. The findings give evidence of a persona-driven, cultural journalism that overlaps in multiple ways with literary journalism.[50] Kongstad's practice can furthermore be read as an example of what Kristensen and From have interpreted as journalism being a cultural product in itself.[51] This is accentuated by Kongstad's repeatedly pointing to himself as a cultural producer rather than just a cultural mediator between cultural producers and cultural consumers.[52] Kongstad not only identifies his cultural-producer persona as something adjacent to the spheres of journalism and criticism, but he also activates this persona within the spheres of journalism and criticism, thereby creating a kind of merged journalism and criticism that becomes a cultural product. Sometimes this creation stems from an expansion of the cultural product being covered; at other times, the creation of Kongstad's cultural product has little to do with the cultural product or topic being covered. In Kongstad's case, the cultural product is the performance of the persona. The persona is the message.

This analysis demonstrates the usefulness of applying performance analysis when examining the work of persona-driven journalists, especially in the digital age.[53] With this extended digital toolbox, the journalist is equipped with a vast array of communicative opportunities for producing first-person narratives that extend well beyond the limits of a textual "I." By conceptualizing the extended, cross-media "I" as a performing persona, the analyst can engage more substantially with the many kinds of doings a journalist and critic perform in the creation of journalism, which also means that the conceptualization of performance feeds into the ongoing discussion on journal-

ism's fluidity and the negotiation of what journalism is and could be.[54]

More specifically, the approach has proven useful in unpacking the intermingling of the literary and the performative, which are central to the practice of persona-driven journalism across platforms, particularly in the field of arts and culture when artists engage in journalistic practice.

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Notes

[1] See, for instance, Hovden and Knapskog, "Doubly Dominated: Cultural Journalists in the Fields of Journalism and Culture," 807; and Hovden and Kristensen, "The Cultural Journalist around the Globe: A Comparative Study of Characteristics, Role Perceptions and Perceived Influences," 15–16.

[2] Hovden and Kristensen, 7.

[3] Moestrup, "Performing the Persona," 7.

[4] Moestrup, 7.

[5] Dowling, "Literary Journalism in the Digital Age," 529–42.

[6] Jacobson, Marino, and Gutsche, "The Digital Animation of Literary Journalism," 528.

[7] Phillips, "From Major to Minor: Literary Journalism and the First Person," 392.

[8] See Hausken, *Medieestetikk. Studier i estetisk medieanalyse*, 9; and Hausken, *Thinking Media Aesthetics, Media Studies, Film Studies, and the Arts*, 31–32.

[9] Auslander, "On the Concept of Persona in Performance," 66.

[10] Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 28–29, 35; and Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 33, 35–116.

[11] Schechner, 35, 37.

[12] Schechner, 37.

[13] Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 1.

[14] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 19.

[15] Auslander, "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto," 4.

[16] Pavis, "Analysing Performance," 229.

[17] Moestrup, "Performing the Persona," 74–84; and Moestrup, "The Use of Wine as a Performance," 43–65.

[18] Postlewait and Davis, "Theatricality: An Introduction," 1–2.

[19] Féral, "Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language," 98.

[20] Féral, 105. *Agent* is defined for the purposes of this study as "one that acts . . . or is capable of producing an effect." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2014), s.v. "agent."

[21] Graver, "The Actor's Bodies," 222, 227.

[22] Sims, "The Literary Journalists," 3; Keeble, "Literary Journalism," 15.

[23] Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalism," 28–30.

[24] Auslander, "On the Concept of Persona in Performance," 63–67.

[25] Graver, "The Actor's Bodies," 222–32. Graver's seven kinds of actors' presence are character, performer, commentator, personage, group representative, flesh, and sensation.

[26] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

[27] de Certeau, 117–18.

[28] Kongstad, "Jeg er skuffet over Mikkel" [I'm disappointed with Mikkel].

[29] As of September 2021, the radio show *Bearnaise er Dyrenes Konge* [*Bearnaise Is the King of Beasts*] is on hiatus. The last episode was aired on May 1, 2020, https://heartbeats.dk/series/bearnaise-er-dyrenes-konge/.

[30] *Weekendavisen* and the newsletter, *Denne uges avis* [This Week's Paper].

[31] Knudsen and Ramskov, *Radio24syv Public Service Redegørelse 2011*.

[32] Kristensen, "The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism," 10–31.

[33] Kongstad has hosted close to 200 episodes of the show. A limited selection of *Bearnaise er Dyrenes Konge* [*Bearnaise Is the King of Beasts*] podcast episodes, in Danish, is available at https://podimo.com/dk/shows/c60d6e23-19e2-4cb9-870b-cb00361b37fb.

[34] Östlund, *The Square*; Capotondi, *The Burnt Orange Heresy*; and the Netflix series, Gatiss and Moffat, *Dracula*.

[35] Bombaci, "Performative Criticism and the Problem of Modernist Chic," 130–33.

[36] Tauning, "Den udtalelse har jeg lænet mig op af i svære stunder" [I've been leaning on that expression during hard times].

[37] Michiko Kakutani took on a range of voices, such as Mike Meyers's Austin Powers character and Truman Capote's Holly Golightly character, in several book reviews. The style of the reviews changed according to the voice in use. See Kakutani, "Tru, Dear, There's Only One Holly. Moi"; Kakutani, " 'Dangerous Kiss': Those Lips! Those Eyes! That Mojo's Working!"

[38] Kongstad, "Jeg er skuffet over Mikkel" [I'm disappointed with Mikkel].

[39] Kongstad, "Man bliver et digt på Hotel Louis C. Jacob" [One becomes a poem at the Hotel Louis C. Jacob].

[40] The March 19, 2016, episode of the podcast is not currently available. It was originally online at: https://www.24syv.dk/programmer/bearnaise-er-dyrenes-konge/13054109/martin-kongstad-helt-alene-pa-kong-hans.

[41] Behrendt, *Dobbeltkontrakten: en æstetisk nydannelse* [The double contract: an aesthetic innovation], 13.

[42] Helt Haarder, *Performativ Biografisme* [Performative biography], 9.

[43] Kongstad, "GAZPACHOKUREN – dag 3. Jeg vejede 82.1, nu vejer je 81.3 kg."

[44] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*," 19.

[45] Kongstad, "Kunne man præsentere mig som Houellebecq light møder Fifty Shades?" [Could you pitch me as Houellebecq light meets Fifty Shades?], 8.

[46] Kinsey, "Objectivity," 176–78.

[47] Kongstad, "Kunne man præsentere mig som Houellebecq light møder Fifty Shades?" 8; Kongstad, *Fryser Jeg* [*Am I Cold: A Novel*].

[48] Kongstad, "Kunne man præsentere mig som Houellebecq light møder Fifty Shades?," 9.

[49] Kongstad, 9.

[50] A broader discussion of this overlap can be found in Kristensen, "The Kinship of Literary Journalism and Cultural Journalism," 10–31. Another case study of the overlap can be seen in Isager, "The Passive-Responsive Journalist," 32–51, an analysis of the highly persona-driven approach of journalist René Fredensborg.

[51] Kristensen and From, *Kulturjournalistik: journalistik om kultur* [Cultural journalism: journalism about culture], 247–55.

[52] Janssen and Verboord, "Cultural Mediators and Gatekeepers," 440.

[53] For additional case studies in which performance analysis is applied to the study of persona-driven journalism, see Moestrup, "Performing the Persona"; and Moestrup, "The Use of Wine as a Performance," 43–65.

[54] Zelizer, *What Journalism Could Be*," 12–15; and Witschge, Deuze, and Willemsen, "Creativity in (Digital) Journalism Studies: Broadening Our Perspective on Journalism Practice," 974–75.

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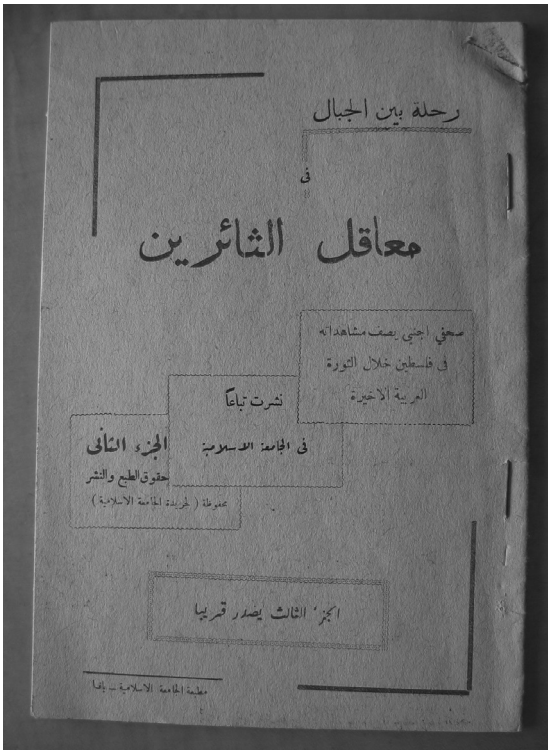
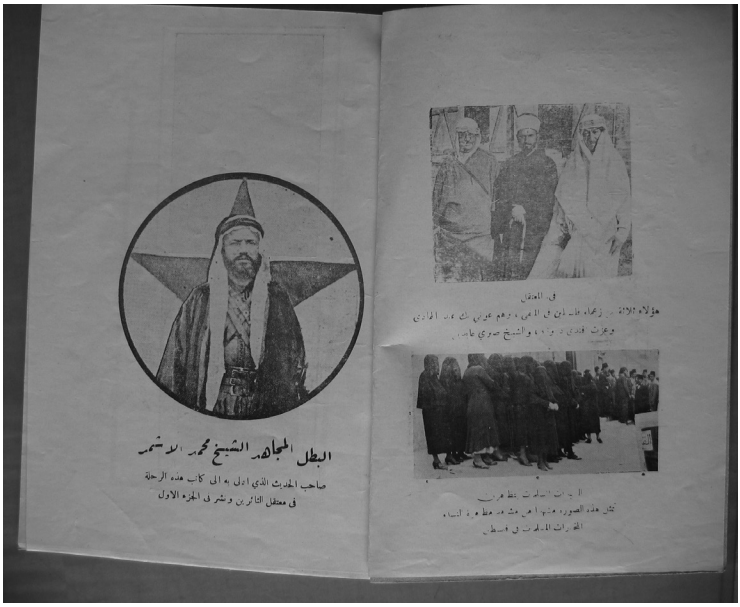


Left: Cover of *Rihla bayna al-jibal fi ma'aqil al-tha'irin* (Journey across the mountains in the strongholds of the rebels).

Bottom: Photo spread from from *Rihla*, volume 2.



Reporting the Insurgency: An Arabic Reportage on the 1936 Revolt in Palestine

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Abstract: Scholars have highlighted the relative dearth of literary journalism in the contemporary Arab Middle East. In the twentieth-century interwar period, though, a few works of narrative journalism were published in Palestine, when the British controlled the country under the terms of the League of Nations Mandate. This study explores "Rihla bayna al-jibal fi ma'aqil al-tha'irin" (Journey across the mountains in the strongholds of the rebels)—an Arabic text that covers the Palestinian revolt of 1936. Initially serialized in a Jaffa newspaper toward the end of the insurgency and then collected in book form, the text was presented as a translation of the articles of a Western foreign correspondent. A close reading will reveal that it is rather the work of an Arab journalist, written for Palestinian readers, and that it meets the defining criteria of literary journalism, despite its concessions to fiction. Factors that would explain the scarcity of Arabic literary journalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries will be used as terms of reference to investigate the circumstances of publication, the design, and the models of this Palestinian reportage. It will be argued that: the political sensitivity of the topic attracted readers and did not discourage advertisers from supporting the daily in which the reportage appeared; British press censorship contributed to shaping its design; and the format of literary reporting, borrowed from the U.S. and European press, was employed to convey an anticolonial message.

Keywords: literary reportage – Palestine – 1936 Arab revolt – Arabic literary journalism – censorship

Times of tremendous political transformation have often been met with matching changes in the domains of literature and the media in the Arab world. One such time was the twentieth-century interwar period when the current states of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine were administered by France and Great Britain within the framework of the League of Nations mandates. Devised with the intent to assist these countries make the transition to self-determination, the mandates proved a controversial structure that the mandated peoples often regarded as an unjust and oppressive form of colonial domination. Consequently, in coincidence with specific historical moments, they did what populations perceiving themselves as oppressed and wronged against usually do: they protested, organized strikes, set up opposition groups and, in extreme circumstances, took up arms and rebelled. In all of this, Arab journalists followed, and sometimes took part in, the events, while always remaining vigilant to the forms of writing that were coming from Europe and the United States. Thus, they could not help but notice the spread of a new journalistic format that was used to cover troubled times and contentious topics such as political revolutions and civil wars.

Despite the current academic interest in narrative journalism, very little research seems to be available about its history in the Arab world. In one of the few scholarly pieces on the contemporary Middle East, David Abrahamson and Ibrahim Abusharif note the relative absence of literary journalism in the region and ascribe such a conspicuous deficiency to three fundamental reasons.[1] The first is based on both financial and literary considerations: relying on the authority of the Egyptian feminist writer Nawal El Saadawi,[2] they conclude that Arabs prefer fiction over nonfiction because the former allows them "to escape the harsher realities of their life."[3] This would have dire economic consequences for nonfiction because not only would readers be unwilling to bear its costs, but advertisers would also be discouraged from choosing newspapers that publish it out of fear that narrative reporting might incur the anger of despotic governments. Second, the level of control that Arab governments exert over the press smothers longform journalism in the cradle because the genre often deals with sensitive topics. Third, the memory of Western colonialism and the Israel-Palestine conflict would have generated "an underlying mistrust for many of the cultural forms that the West has to offer."[4]

Contrary to the expectations built on the limited academic literature, some works of Arabic narrative journalism come directly from Palestine and date from the years of the British Mandate. More specifically, some examples of literary reportage were published when the anticolonial struggle of the Palestinian Arabs took the form of a violent, all-out rebellion between 1936

and 1939. As Thomas B. Connery has noted about the United States, so also in Palestine, the 1930s saw an increase in works of literary journalism because the decade was "a time of tremendous change," linking the appearance of progressive ideas to big changes in the media.[5] A reader knowledgeable of the forms of contemporary newspapers would probably liken one of these texts, serialized in 1936, to a work of literary reportage. Titled "Rihla bayna al-jibal fi ma'aqil al-tha'irin" (Journey across the mountains in the strongholds of the rebels),[6] its twenty-one installments came out in the Jaffa newspaper *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya* (The Islamic union) from September 27 through October 28, after which the series was discontinued and left incomplete without notice or explanation. Around the same time, the publishing house belonging to and named after *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya* collected the installments in two small volumes. The newspaper editor introduced them as a collection of articles penned by an unnamed foreign journalist who had granted exclusive publishing rights in Palestine to *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya*.[7] However, far from being what it claims, the book rather reads as a reportage originally written for a Palestinian audience.

Peculiar circumstances brought about the configuration of this book through a hybridization experiment that extended the already blurred boundaries between fiction and reportage as they were conceived in the U.S. and European press of the time. Nonetheless, the *Rihla* fulfills the main criteria that define literary journalism according to its practitioners. The three factors that Abrahamson and Abusharif propose to explain a general phenomenon in the contemporary Arab world will then provide the frame of reference for this attempt at elucidating the appearance of a reportage in an earlier period. In other words, while Abrahamson and Abusharif's propositions may explain the apparent dearth of literary journalism in the contemporary Middle East, there is reason to believe that precisely the same factors underlay this earlier work of literary reportage.

In fact, in a climate of intense political and military confrontation, reader response pushed *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya* to collect the installments of the "Rihla" into two book volumes, while advertisers kept supporting the newspaper. At the same time, the level of censorship that the British authorities were imposing on the press in Palestine contributed to informing the design and features of the serialized episodes. Finally, this exploration will show that the (presumably Arab) author decided to follow the example of European and U.S. journalists, who had made literary reporting well known through their coverage of other violent events, because he trusted the "revolutionary" potential of this genre of writing. In so doing, the author brought to the surface the transformation affecting the narrator's viewpoint and personality during

his immersion experience, which usually remains unexpressed in works by Western authors.

A preliminary sketch of the Palestinian revolt will provide some historical background. Then, evidence will be provided to support the argument that the *Rihla* was written by an Arab author and meets the requisites to be considered a reportage. Finally, the study will expand on the roles that reader response, advertisers' support, censorship as an opportunity for creativity, and the specifics of this transfer of a literary form from the Western press contributed to the inception of the *Rihla*.

In the Strongholds of the Rebels, as a Literary Reportage

The historical context in which the *Rihla* came to light is what Ted Swedenburg has dubbed "the most significant anticolonial insurgency in the Arab East during the interwar period."[8] Because of the growing influx of Jewish immigrants, groups of modern-educated political activists from a middle-class background led the struggle against the British administration and started a general strike on April 19, 1936. In the first month, national committees were established across the country to organize the protests. At the same time, the leaders of the main political parties formed the Arab Higher Committee (AHC) to provide national leadership for the strike. They convened a meeting of the national committees in Jerusalem on May 7, 1936, during which they demanded that the British concede local government to the people of Palestine, curb Jewish immigration, and stop land sales to Jews. Starting from May, the turmoil escalated into an all-out revolt. Armed bands, mostly of peasants, carried out acts of guerrilla warfare against British and Jewish targets. In the second half of August, several hundred fighters from other Arab countries joined the rebellion under the command of the Lebanese Fawzi al-Qawuqji. The AHC called off the strike on October 12, 1936, but the only concession they obtained from the British was the dispatch of a royal commission. The latter published its proceedings in July 1937, recommending that Palestine be divided into two states: one Arab and one Jewish. The Arab population strongly rejected this solution and in September 1937 resumed the revolt, which would eventually be stifled in 1939.[9]

The first installments of the "Rihla" were published in the last few weeks of the 1936 stage of the revolt. The newspaper editor presented it as an account written by "a correspondent of one of the major foreign newspapers."[10] The correspondent had recently undertaken a journey in northern Palestine and was sending the pieces to his newspaper, on the same date of their publication in *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya*. Readers also learn from the reportage itself that the narrator-reporter hails from an unspecified Western country and

studied Arabic at university.[11] All the episodes published in the newspaper are numbered, and each carries the overall title and an explanatory subheading ("A foreign journalist describes his experiences in the north"). Yet the short chapters do not quite fit the editorial needs of the newspaper, as they are sometimes interrupted in the middle.[12] Overall, the "Rihla" seems more a long text written for a book project that was then divided into installments to be accommodated in the newspaper columns without much change.

The foreign correspondent's journey takes place over an uninterrupted period of five days. Textual clues suggest it started on or around September 10, 1936, and there are hints the author may have conflated different journeys or compressed a longer trip into one narration. The narrator departs from Jerusalem by car without a clear plan, wishing to meet the armed bands operating in the northern region, where the fiercest fights were then occurring. At the first stopover in Nablus, he interviews the president of the local national committee. There, the two men watch from the balcony of the president's house as Palestinian guerrillas attack a Jewish convoy.[13] In the town of Anabta, the narrator chances upon a man who agrees to become his guide. This unnamed Palestinian provides the narrator with Arab clothes and travels with him by horse to the rebel bands' headquarters. Thus, on his very first night, the reporter has the good fortune to interview two prominent, unnamed, rebel commanders, whom Palestinian readers of the time would easily identify as al-Qawuqji and the Syrian Muhammad al-Ashmar. The two rebels articulate the reasons foreign fighters like themselves are joining the Palestinian insurgency from, respectively, an Arab nationalist and a Muslim viewpoint.

The following day, the narrator stops at a larger town, where he has lunch with a group of rural notables that include a wise and taciturn person. This man, unnamed but to be identified as the Palestinian rebel commander 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, argues for the Palestinian rebels' love for freedom and their independence from the decisions of the AHC. All along the journey, villagers and insurgents share with the foreign correspondent both their views and a wealth of stories about the revolt. At the same time, the narrator frequently complains about the hardships and perils of his journey, sometimes expressing regret about his choice to visit Palestine. At the last stopover, though, he realizes that his many experiences have radically changed his attitude towards the Palestinian Arabs.

The Foreign Correspondent as Literary Ploy

Some features of the text suggest the claim that a foreign correspondent is its author is a literary ploy. Neither the foreword to the book nor the first installment in the newspaper provides any detail regarding the identity of

either the journalist or his newspaper. The editors of the book try to make up for this failure to comply with the rules of translation from the foreign press by asserting that the author had asked that his name be kept secret.[14] Yet, in addition to the anonymous authorship, other peculiarities and inconsistencies of the text stand out, revealing plot holes and glaring omissions. For one, the correspondent describes his journey as unplanned wanderings that sometimes take turns and trajectories chosen on a whim.[15] Even his travel guide, who is well acquainted with the whereabouts and secrets of the insurgents, is a Palestinian whom the correspondent chances upon while smoking a narghile at a coffeehouse. In reality, such a journey would have required thorough planning and liaising with the rebels, because some of its stretches, especially the road between Nablus and Anabta, were the favored areas for bomb attacks and landmines.[16] Moreover, it seems unlikely that al-Qawuqji would have allowed an unknown foreign journalist with no connection to the milieus of the rebellion to visit his headquarters, because he was very cautious about the risk of being spied upon.[17] What is also surprising in a reportage allegedly written for foreign readers is the lack of background information related to the political landscape of the rebellion in Palestine.[18] The author goes so far as to attach an announcement issued by the rebels in response to a Statement of Policy of the Colonial Office, but he glosses over the British document itself and the related reply from the AHC.[19] It is therefore clear that this account was written for a Palestinian audience, as the implied reader would need to be abreast of many details of the revolt without subscribing to the positions of the Arab political leadership.

Such an interpretation brings up that most important question when reading a book, which, as Gregory Currie has noted, readers seldom need to ask: Is this a work of fiction or nonfiction?[20] More precisely, is the *Rihla* a novel containing portions of factual references or a reportage of a journalistic mission that is partially cloaked in fiction? Determining the answer to this question will first address the issue from the viewpoint of pragmatics and narratology and then measure it against the description of the literary journalism genre proposed by practitioners.

First, a prefatory remark to the book version of the *Rihla* suggests its nonfictional status. Written by an anonymous editor, the foreword begins as follows:

> Perhaps, the best testimony of the Arab Palestinian question in its latest stage are these installments that were written by a foreign journalist, who imposed as a condition that we do not reveal his name, . . . after he carried out a tiring journey in the northern mountains of Palestine, where a devout group of Arabs that are fighting on the path of God and the homeland are stationed.[21]

This introductory passage then describes the journalist's account as "what he saw," as does a similar short paragraph introducing the first newspaper installment.[22] Second, the *Rihla* delves into current events and public figures of paramount importance in the Arab Middle East at the time of publication, and the newspaper in which its installments appeared does not hint at the possibility the content might be fictional. Later issues of the daily also quoted passages of the interview with al-Ashmar that is contained in the *Rihla*.[23] Thus, paratextual comments and situational clues point out its status as nonfictional.

Possible Breaches of Literary Journalism Conventions

Then, there are the questions of how to explain the use of a fictitious narrator and other changes that likely altered facts by recasting some events and changing dialogues as if the journalist were a foreign reporter? Contemporary practitioners of literary journalism might regard these features as objectionable and conclude that the *Rihla* breaches some fundamental aesthetic conventions of reportage. However, a look into the tradition of European and U.S. journalism in the first half of the twentieth century confirms that the boundaries between literary reportage and novel tended to be less inviolable than today's critics might expect. For example, a few scholars share the opinion that the U.S. writer John Reed sometimes departed from factual accuracy because of his love for embroidering a good story.[24] Similarly, in the writings of several famous authors dealing with the Spanish civil war, the distinction between fiction and nonfiction was often blurred. Well-known books that are traditionally categorized as novels, such as Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), André Malraux's *L'Espoir* (*Man's Hope*, 1937), and Gustav Regler's *Das große Beispiel* (*The Great Crusade*, 1940), contain elements of factual reporting. On the other hand, works usually regarded as reportage, such as George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) and Georges Bernanos's *Les Grands Cimetières sous la Lune* (*A Diary of My Times*, 1938), make many concessions to fiction, or appear to, because of forgetfulness and inadvertent mistakes.[25] In particular, according to Simard-Houde, the French *grand reportage* in the interwar period is often characterized by a high degree of fictionalization, and sometimes even trespasses into the field of the novel.[26] Early authors of literary journalism who did not conform to strict rules of accurate representation may be "exculpated," Mark Kramer suggests, by the early phase of the genre itself and "the presumed lack of intention to deceive."[27]

As will be shown, the *Rihla* possesses most, if not all, of the characteristics that, according to some experts of the field, define the craft of literary journalism. In particular, the following defining principles, which Kramer pro-

posed in his list of "breakable rules," will be examined: immersion research, covenants about accuracy and candor, voice, style, a disengaged and mobile stance, structure, and meaning built upon reader's sequential reactions.[28]

The *Rihla* meets the first rule of being based on immersion research, as it claims first-hand experience of the people, places, and living conditions of the insurgency. Its author was probably a Syrian newspaper's correspondent who spent time with the armed bands in September 1936. According to the Damascus newspaper *Alif-Ba'*, an unnamed reporter from their staff traveled to Northern Palestine to interview some rebels.[29] His mission lasted at least ten days and, in his own words, was "an adventure surrounded by countless perils." Oddly enough, the assignment produced only a two-column account with a relatively narrow focus.[30] In a separate study, this author has argued the journalist is an *Alif-Ba'* correspondent from Jaffa, Mahmud al-Jarkas, who would later author a long interview with the commander-in-chief of the revolt.[31] There are several reasons to surmise that al-Jarkas authored the *Rihla*, the content of which draws from the mission he had originally carried out for his newspaper. First, the *Alif-Ba'* correspondent's article is datelined Jenin [Palestine], September 6, only a few days before the time, and close to the place, of the setting of the *Rihla*. Second, the article shares some points with the book: both the unnamed, *Alif-Ba'* reporter and the narrator of the *Rihla* declare at the beginning of their pieces that their missions are motivated by their "desire" (*raghba*) to interview the Palestinian rebels.[32] And third, the interviewees of the *Alif-Ba'* article and the rural notables in the *Rihla* are asked the same questions regarding their obedience to the AHC, and both give similar answers that stress their independence. The author of the *Alif-Ba'* article downplays the differences, praising the complementarity and solidarity between politicians and guerrillas—as does the *Rihla* narrator.[33]

As Kramer writes, "*Literary journalists work out implicit covenants about accuracy and candor with readers and with sources*."[34] The sort of implicit covenant that binds the writer to his readers is easily recognizable in the *Rihla*, as are the camouflage the narrator has taken and his relationship with his sources. The author promises his readers that he will be offering a testimony based on first-hand experience. However, as already evidenced, the noncompliance with the conventions regulating the translation of articles from the foreign press warns readers about the limits of such a claim to truthfulness. At the same time, the preface to the book exposes the implausibility that a Western, non-Muslim journalist would have authored "a memorial of a glorious jihad that wrote for the Arabs of Palestine pages that will remain immortal examples."[35]

Retrospective Narratives, Framing Devices

While the *Rihla* may well be based on real experience, what emerges is the writer's craft of selecting, simplifying, amplifying, and ordering fragments of impressions and events to offer his readers what Susanne Langer describes as the appearance of "a purely and completely experienced reality."[36] Two features reveal the artificiality of the attempt at constituting what Langer calls "*virtual life*."[37] One is the retrospective narrative that, even if realized a few days after the travel, aims to confer on the tale the virtual appearance of a complete experience. The other feature is the framing device adopted: the two different forewords that introduce the newspaper installments and the book, written by an editor who is not, or pretends not to be, the author. As John Hellmann also points out, although such prefaces often emphasize the factuality of the text that they frame, they acknowledge the "imaginative transformation" wrought by the author, thus betraying the fictional nature of its form.[38]

The *Rihla* author's attitude towards his sources is clearly stated in the argument he employs at the beginning of the book to convince his would-be guide of his good intentions. He writes, "After some effort I managed to convince him that my work is of benefit to the Arabs and the *mujahideen* themselves, and, that the publication of such facts in the newspapers of the West would serve the [Palestinian Arab] cause."[39]

Although the book's foreword stresses the correspondent's fairness towards his subject, the reportage makes little room for another point of view other than that of the bands grouped around al-Qawuqji. This leads to another essential characteristic of literary journalism, stressed also by Tom Wolfe: voice.[40] In more recent times, scholars of literary journalism have employed this term with two competing meanings. First, voice may signify the narrative voice telling the story.[41] In this case, Gérard Genette's terminology devised for fiction would identify the narrating voice in the *Rihla* as "auto-diegetic," for the first-person narrator is also the main character of the story. The perspective from which the foreign reporter relates the facts is what Genette calls "internal focalization," which means the narrator filters all the information provided without being able to intrude in the inner thoughts of the other characters.[42]

However, scholars and practitioners of literary nonfiction more often refer to personal authorial voice, a metaphor that suggests coherent inferences regarding the relationship between a piece of writing and its individual author. Thus conceived, voice is one of the defining marks of literary journalism, as opposed to the impersonal tone of news reporting. As Kramer stresses, it is the means through which the personality of the author comes out, without any "bureaucratic shelter" and unaffiliated with "any institution."[43] The

personality that the authorial voice conveys in the *Rihla* shows enthusiasm for the ideals of the revolt, extends a great deal of respect to the top rebel commanders, cannot hide his religious faith, and is fascinated by the life choices of the rebel bands. When approaching his first stop, the narrator enthusiastically cries out:

> . . . the driver said that this is Nablus. This is Nablus?? This name is not unfamiliar to anyone who has stayed in this country even only one day. It was the first-born daughter of the revolt, and from there the first rebel left for the mountains; there the [British] army faced horrors that they have not encountered anywhere else, so much that even its name became intimidating.[44]

Betraying Cultural Identity

In the same way, some stylistic features betray the cultural identity of the author. Sentence length and punctuation in the reportage are typical of Arabic journalistic prose, as is also the division of the text into small sections, often comprising only one short paragraph each and introduced by explanatory headings. Alternating descriptive passages and direct dialogue in some sections of volume two also recall the style of shorter journalistic pieces bordering on literary journalism, such as the aforementioned *Alifba'* article of September 10, 1936. In the text, the implied Arab author does not signal any gap between his positions on the parties involved in the revolt and the views of the narrating 'I,' the alleged Western reporter. The inquisitive tone the narrator sometimes uses with lower-ranking insurgents as a self-conscious tool of his craft gives way to self-effacement when he interviews more prominent figures, who almost intimidate him. Thus, the author omitted his questions to the two top commanders and arranged a synthesis of their answers as if they were uninterrupted monologues.[45]

Indeed, some parts of the *Rihla* make for dull reading. The device of ascribing the narration to a foreign reporter combines with the excluding of details to avoid the wrath of the censor to flatten the style of the book. That the narrator of this adventurous tour does not give personal insights and describes insurgents and villagers in generic and colorless ways, results in the places and people failing to come alive on the page. However, rare passages do let seep a mixture of reverential awe and genuine fear of the rebels. For instance, the simile that describes their demeanor inside their headquarters evokes the feral slowness and fixed gaze of predators in their lair: "In the commander's headquarters we sat on Arab seats prepared for the visitors. I looked around, right and left, where the tough armed men were sitting heavily like lions, all of them staring at me menacingly."[46]

Another exception to the dullness in the narration is the telling of stories about Palestinian women's courage. One of them in particular is worth quoting because it condenses the main themes of the discourse on the 1936–39 revolt: the brave self-sacrifice of the insurgents, the unequal contest between the most powerful colonial empire and the small rebel bands, the unmistakable religious connotation that the revolt acquired, especially in the countryside; and villagers' spontaneous support of, and women's unprecedented participation in, the anticolonial struggle.

Everything starts with a massive operation, whereby 3,000 British soldiers—employing tanks, armored cars, and airplanes—surround a much smaller rebel band in the mountains. Then, there follows:

> In a village close to the battle, an Arab noblewoman had come to know how things stood. She was one of those women in whose heart faith dwells, and, as soon as she knew of the battle, she made her way through mountains and valleys. Bare-footed and with her face unveiled, she stirred up the spirits of thousands of armed men and took their lead, awakening their zeal with her angelic, warm voice. She arrived at the battlefield while the *mujahidin* were on their knees because they had almost run out of ammunition. The army was closing in on them, and they had set their minds on fighting with knives and bayonets, because they preferred the honored death of the martyrs to surrendering. . . . In such a predicament, the Arab lady joined them, leading a large multitude of men who were praising God and repeating "*Allahu Akbar*." They surrounded the army as tightly as a bracelet wraps the wrist, and the two factions clashed in a deadly battle, at the end of which the rebels withdrew in an orderly way while the soldiers dispersed.[47]

The young Palestinian journalist Muhammad Mustafa Ghandur noticed the symbolic potential of this story. He would develop the character of this heroine into an allegory for the violated country and exploit some details of this clash in his novel, *Tha'r al-dam* (Blood Revenge), published in 1939.[48]

Recollection and Digression

Another important feature of literary journalism is the adoption of "a disengaged and mobile stance" to tell stories and address readers. As has been suggested in this analysis, the whole *Rihla* story is narrated from what Kramer calls a "retrospective platform," which the narrating "I" uses, not only to recollect, but also to comment on his memories, address the reader directly and allow digressions.[49] The digressions of this reportage are usually short and explanatory or anecdotal. The reporter does not dwell on explanations, adding, instead, mostly concise clarifications. For example, when he passes by the place where an event that is considered the prelude to the insurgency happened, he tells his readers:

> Along the route between Deir Sharaf and Anabta are sinuous, high mountains, across which the road twists and bends repeatedly. In one of these curves, which the driver said is called Bal'a Bend, the first incident happened in the night between the 16 and 17 of last April. The first spark of the current revolt was ignited two days later.[50]

The narrator sometimes slows the pace of his narration to tell stories that provide evidence for some of the points he makes. Besides the accounts attesting to women's participation in the rebellion, for instance, he narrates an episode to undergird his assertion that "the hatred of colonialism and colonizers is deeply rooted in the hearts of the Arabs." Remarkably, here the author dares to put his thoughts in the mind of a British officer:

> In that village . . . there was a child that was playing in the street. When he heard the news that the army was arriving, instead of fleeing to hide at home, he ran to the place where he had already prepared a scrap of iron as sharp as a razor blade. He grabbed it and used it to attack the soldiers, while calling them names. The [British] commander happened to be close by and ordered a soldier to bring him the child. The soldier dutifully went to catch the child, but the latter resisted and, instead of running away, attacked him with his knife! While the soldier was lifting him up with his hands to take him to the commander, the boy never stopped fighting back and repeatedly stabbed his captor, until he had been brought in front of the officer. After the commander had had an unusual and pleasant exchange with that innocent child, he liked him and undoubtedly believed that a country that makes children like that, who was fed by his mother the hatred of colonialism and colonialists from the earliest age, a nation like this will not be colonized and will not perish."[51]

Kramer argues that structure is of primary importance to readers' experience, and meaning is developed by "*building upon readers' sequential reactions*."[52] The narrative of the *Rihla* follows a chronological succession of travels and stopovers. The author slows down and indulges in telling stories at certain points, adding the narrator's impressions, or providing information, at certain others. Thus, the tour brings the foreign correspondent, and with him also his readers, to realize the rebels are not brutes and all the different strata of Palestinian Arab society support the insurgency. The first interviewee, the president of the Nablus national committee, projects an image of "gravitas and dignity" as he shares "valuable special information"[53] with the narrator. The visit to the rebels' headquarters shows they are organized according to democratic principles that enable all of the fighters to be acquainted with the developments of their struggle and address their commander freely.[54] At the same time, the journalist seeks to show that the leaders of the revolt are remarkable individuals who would be able to lead the army of a modern state.

To this goal, he gives ". . . a summary of [the] invaluable declarations [of the Commander-in-chief], so that the people of my race in the West understand the cultural level of these whom some deceptive newspapers describe as criminals. By my life, as far as I saw and heard, they are the best of men in science and morals."[55]

The narrator attends a rebel congress and attaches a copy of its deliberations to his reportage to show that the insurgents have established a council that responds to the statement of policy of the British government as the institutions of a modern state would do.[56] After his conversations with people from the countryside, the reporter concludes that "the [Palestinian] peasants are deeply concerned with the political situation and the destiny of their country, and they are as able to understand the national politics as do men of culture in towns."[57] After having been taken along all the steps of this tour, readers will have had all the vicarious emotional and intellectual experiences that allow them to draw their own conclusions regarding the final meaning of the complex experience narrated in this book. Even though the text never spells it out, the succession of scenes the author sets up converge to argue that the Palestinians deserve to have their own state, because they have the moral standing and intellectual aptitude to rule themselves without the assistance of the Mandate Power.

Readers' Response to the Text and Censorship

Three different kinds of evidence witness to the success of the *Rihla*. The first is the decision to collect its installments into bound volumes. Publishing was an expensive venture in the 1930s in Palestine, due to the high cost of both paper and printing facilities, and the competition of high-quality publications that were coming from other Arab countries, especially Egypt.[58] Nonetheless, *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya* decided to collect the "Rihla" into volumes shortly after its publication in the newspaper. As the anonymous foreword to the book explains:

> . . . people received [the installments] very enthusiastically due to the moderation that they contain, as the situation requires, and they rushed to them. That is proven by the fact that many insistently requested the issues [of the newspaper] that they had missed, in which those installments had been serialized.[59]

The success of the book is also confirmed by diplomatic documents from other Arab countries where its distribution was attempted and by intertextual references. In March 1937, the authorities of the French Mandate banned the *Rihla* from Lebanon and Syria.[60] Their assessment was that "this booklet is likely to overexcite the spirits" of the readers, because "[t]he insurgents,

most of whom were Syrian (Kaoukji, El Assi, El Achmar, etc…), are treated as heroes."[61] However, the *Rihla* continued to circulate in Syria, as can be deduced from a reference in a 1938 book by Khidr al-'Ali Mahfuz, one of the Syrian volunteers who had joined the revolt in Palestine in 1936. Mahfuz probably referred to the way the author of the reportage—as is the "custom" of journalists—embellished "the description of this insane adventure" of crossing the barren mountains of Northern Palestine.[62] During the second phase of the revolt, another anonymous reportage titled *Mughamarati fi jibal Filastin* (My adventures in the mountains of Palestine) imitated the format of the *Rihla*.[63] In 1939 Ghandur would also borrow some passages and take inspiration from the *Rihla* for his novel, *Tha'r al-dam* (Blood revenge).[64]

Third, as noted earlier, Abrahamson and Abusharif argue that "fear of disapproval and retribution" by Middle Eastern governments might prevent advertisers from employing media outlets that are not aligned with the interests and prohibitions of the ruling parties.[65] In the 1930s, however, the publication of this reportage did not affect the appearance of advertisements in *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya*. As in other newspapers, advertisements had virtually disappeared during the revolt because of the general strike, but they resumed as before in the second half of October 1936.

Reviewing a contemporary Iranian novel, critic James Wood argues that "Tyranny is the mother of metaphor, and all that."[66] In some instances, Wood continues, limits imposed by censorship have inspired the creativity of fiction writers, who need to invent more sensitive and thoughtful strategies to illustrate their points. Similar reasons probably prompted the author of the *Rihla* to attribute the narrative of his travels to a foreign correspondent.

In April 1936, Arabic newspapers in Palestine enthusiastically supported the general strike and offered detailed coverage of the activities of the popular committees and the AHC.[67] When the protest took a violent turn, they started meeting a growing repressive action from the British. The latter put into place measures of control of the press, which included preventive censorship of newspaper articles, as part of the emergency regulations implemented in the country.[68] Newspapers had then to bear many restrictions or they would be suspended, with heavy financial consequences for journalists and owners. The regulations prohibited, inter alia, the mention of the names of the rebel commanders and the dispatch of correspondents to the battlefields or the places where the armed bands were located. Journalists were supposed to limit their coverage of the fights to what was contained in the official communiqués of the British authorities.

Such being the context, if an Arab journalist had undertaken a journey to interview the insurgents, he would have needed to devise special expedients

to publish his articles without falling into the net of British censorship. For this reason, the author of the *Rihla* would not only have omitted the names of the rebel leaders but would also have resorted to ascribing his mission to a foreign correspondent. Otherwise, no series of articles would have ever gone beyond the first installment, and *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya* would have been suspended and warned to avoid publishing "inciting news."[69]

Transfer of a Literary Form

Indeed, the choice of ascribing authorship to a Western reporter shows that the author of the *Rihla* was aware of the features of narrative journalism in many parts of the globe. In the first half of the twentieth century, the most representative authors of reportage leaned to the left or were openly affiliated with its political parties.[70] When they reported on revolutions and social upheavals in foreign countries, they would openly show a bias towards the viewpoint of the belligerents that represented the progressive faction rising against the reaction. Some of the best examples of such reporting were the U.S. 'radical' journalists and writers John Reed and Lincoln Steffens.[71] Particularly, the *Rihla* recalls the framework that Reed devised to reorganize his dispatches on the Mexican revolution in his book, *Insurgent Mexico*.[72] Reed offered the model of a foreign journalist who started his mission from a position of relative sympathy towards the cause of the Mexican rebels, but also of fear of their different and violent world and of inexperience of war. During his mission, he wore the same clothes as the insurgents, shared their food, rode their animals and trains, enjoyed their hospitality and protection, met figureheads and rank-and-file members of the revolutionary troops, and repeatedly put his life at risk. Thus, Reed gradually developed a liking for the qualities and ideals of the Mexican rebels until he eventually found them "wonderfully congenial," as he wrote in his short autobiography.[73]

Such being the characteristics of some representative books of the genre, no wonder that the author of the *Rihla* considered it suitable to serve the cause of a colonized people. In fact, the foreign correspondent's mission translates into the discovery of the many qualities of the rebels and the soundness of their cause. Commenting about Reed's dispatches from Mexico, Knudson observes that "the revolution enveloped everyone."[74] Similarly, each person the narrator of the *Rihla* meets contributes to draw the picture of the Palestinian Arabs as a people who share the same political project, are determined to sacrifice their lives and properties to their cause, and can rule themselves according to the conventions and institutions of a modern state. In a way reminiscent of Reed, what the journalist finally achieves is more than knowledge acquisition, as he undergoes a change that invests his whole personality

and identity along with his attitude towards the Palestinian Arabs. Unlike the U.S. writer, however, the narrator sums it up explicitly in a direct address to his readers:

> Trust me, my dear reader, when I started this journey of mine I was a foreigner. I was not sharing the feelings of the people of this country, nor the sentiments that they harbor. All my research and trips were motivated by a journalistic goal, nothing less and nothing more. However, after carrying out a short journey, I became aware of truths that are not easily accessible to others, and I saw things that would be difficult for a foreigner to come to know. Thus, I started feeling the same sentiments as the people of this country! I share their feelings and experience their same pains. In the end, I have become an Arab . . . after I was a foreigner.[75]

The evolution of the fictitious narrator shows metatextual awareness of what John Hartsock delineates as the mission of literary journalism—that of narrowing the distance between the writer's and reader's subjectivities and the objectified world.[76] However, while works like Reed's are written for foreign readers and genuinely aim at correcting "the cheap stereotypes heaped on the Mexicans by their United States counterparts,"[77] this study has reconstructed the *Rihla* as addressed primarily to Palestinian Arab readers. As such, it rather reads as a nationalist text that, as Partha Chatterjee explains about nationalist literature in the colonial world,[78] tries to prove that the Palestinians are not backward people. On the contrary, they can rule themselves and live up to the highest standards of modern societies.

This reportage prompts readers who belonged to the same society that was the object of reporting to realize their moral and intellectual equality to the universe of the purported narrator. Thus, the text claims the compatibility of the Palestinians with the needs of the modern world and the worthiness of their project of state by constructing the empathic approval of an open-minded Western observer. In conducting this creative operation, though, the author missed the point that, despite their enthusiastic openness to other cultures, journalists such as Reed did not lack balance. Neither were they completely blind to rebels' faults. The Arab insurgents of the *Rihla* are superhumanly flawless, and the continuous celebration of their virtues risks falling into conceitedness. The choice of turning the subject into the "objectified world" and projecting its observations on, and celebration of, itself onto a straw-narrator sometimes takes a toll on both the credibility and readability of the book.

Conclusions

Despite the dearth of academic literature documenting its history, there is evidence of experiments in literary journalism having started at a relatively

early stage of the history of the Arabic press. Some examples emerged in the 1930s, when violent transformations were affecting a few of the countries placed under the mandates of the League of Nations. In particular, the fluidity of the political situation in Palestine prompted authors who were professional journalists to borrow a genre that European and U.S. writers had already been employing to cover social changes and political upheavals.

Published at the end of the 1936 revolt, *Rihla bayna al-jibal fi ma'aqil al-tha'irin* meets the main requisites that define literary journalism. Its author, probably the correspondent of a Syrian newspaper, narrated in a personal and passionate voice the account of what was likely an actual journey. He imparted his narrative from a free, retrospective platform, often slowing down its pace to relate stories he had been told or to demonstrate a point. The overall structure, which follows the chronology of the foreign correspondent's journey, is constructed in such a way as to lead the reader along the same path the narrator follows, aiming at the final identification of both narrator and reader with the insurgents and their cause. Contrary to what might explain the scarcity of Arabic literary journalism in contemporary times, the sensitivity of the topic of the *Rihla* met an enthusiastic response from readers and did not alienate advertisers; British censorship seemingly contributed to shape its fictional component; and the format of literary reportage was redeployed to defend the anticolonial struggle of the Palestinian Arabs.

Indeed, even though the *Rihla* mimics the reportages of Western writers, it challenges the premises of colonial domination from the very perspective of the colonized, not from a foreign observer's approximation. It defends the ability of the Palestinians to cope by themselves with the challenges of the modern world and their resolution to resist the colonial projects that the Mandate Power was set to implement.

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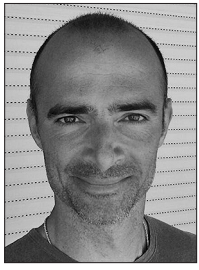

Notes

[1] Abrahamson and Abusharif, "Literary Journalism in the Middle East," 24.

[2] All references herein to Nawal El Saadawi use the more common transliteration, "Nawal El Saadawi," rather than the hyphenated El-Saadawi, as used in Abrahamson and Abusharif.

[3] Nawal El Saadawi, from interview by David Abrahamson and Ibrahim Abusharif, August 13, 2010, tape recording, as quoted in Abrahamson and Abusharif, "Literary Journalism in the Middle East," 28.

[4] Abrahamson and Abusharif, 32.

[5] Connery, "Research Review: Magazines and Literary Journalism," 5.

[6] From here, the "Rihla" for references to the newspaper article installments and *Rihla* for the book title. Throughout this article Arabic has been transliterated according to a simplified version based on the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, omitting all diacritics except ʻayn (ʻ) and hamza (ʼ). (Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.)

[7] "Rihla bayna al-jibal fi maʻaqil al-thaʼirin," [Journey across the mountains in the strongholds of the rebels], *al-Jamiʻa al-Islamiyya* [The Islamic union] (Jaffa, Palestine), September 27, 1936, 3.

[8] Swedenburg, introduction to *Memories of Revolt*, xix.

[9] On the revolt, see Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 162–294; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire*, 233–63.

[10] "Rihla bayna al-jibal fi maʻaqil al-thaʼirin," *al-Jamiʻa al-Islamiyya* (Jaffa, Palestine), September 27, 1936, 3.

[11] *Rihla*, 1:15–16.

[12] See, for instance, the installments in *al-Jamiʻa al-Islamiyya* for September 27, 1936, 3; September 29, 1936, 3; October 13, 1936, 3; October 14, 1936, 2.

[13] This episode may refer to historical events that happened on September 7, 1936. See "Maʻraka kabirah fi jibal Nablus" [Big battle on Nablus mountains], *Filastin*, September 8, 1936, 4. A photograph of the balcony on which this interview would have taken place can be found at http://www.akramzuayter.org/galary/1/2.jpg. Accessed June 24, 2021.

[14] *Rihla*, 1:2.

[15] See, for example, *Rihla*, 1:3: "When we were ascending through the mountains, I felt the desire to see some of those that the Arabs call mujahidin because they left good life in towns to defend their Arabism and rather preferred the hardships on top of the mountains." See also *Rihla*, 1:26–27.

[16] "Weekly Summary of Intelligence, Palestine and Transjordan," September 11, 1936, 6, and September 18, 1936, 6, FO 371/20030.

[17] *Al-Qawuqji*, Mudhakkirat Fawzi al-Qawuqji, 211.

[18] For example, the narrator does not explain that he is concerned about traveling by car because the rebels are targeting the few vehicles still circulating, which would belong either to Jews and British or to Arab drivers who are breaking the strike. Also, the author does not expand on the national committees, but simply says that he meets with the president of the Nablus committee. Neither does he

mention that the two rebel leaders he interviews are not from Palestine. *Rihla*, 1:7, 13, 16. All this would have been well known to Palestinian readers but would have needed additional explanations in a reportage for a non-Palestinian audience.

[19] *Rihla*, 1:17–23.

[20] Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, 1.

[21] *Rihla*, 1:2.

[22] "Rihlah," *al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya*, September 27, 1936, 3; *Rihla*, 1:3.

[23] Cf. *Rihla*, 1:14–15, with the captions to the pictures of al-Ashmar in "Min dhikrayat al-thawra" [From the memories of the revolt] and "al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Ashmar" [Shaykh Muhammad al-Ashmar].

[24] Knudson, "John Reed," 66.

[25] Monteath, "The Spanish Civil War," 75–76; Jurt, "Malraux et Bernanos," 73–87.

[26] Simard-Houde, "Le reporter devient un auteur,"16.

[27] Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," 24.

[28] Kramer, 21–34.

[29] "Mandub Alif Ba'," *Alif Ba'* (Damascus), September 9, 1936, 4.

[30] "Hadith thuwwar," *Alif Ba* (Damascus), September 10, 1936, 5.

[31] Macaluso, "Claiming Modernity in Mandate Palestine," 366.

[32] Cf. "Mandub Alif Ba'," 5, and *Rihla*, 1:3.

[33] Cf. "Mandub Alif Ba'," 5, and *Rihla*, 2:37–38.

[34] Kramer, "Breakable Rules," 23 (italics in original).

[35] *Rihla*, 1:2.

[36] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 212.

[37] Langer, 212 (italics in original).

[38] Hellmann, "Fables of Fact," 421.

[39] *Rihla*, 1:7. See note 14.

[40] Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 17.

[41] Aare, "A Narratological Approach to Literary Journalism," 110–11.

[42] Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 245.

[43] Kramer, "Breakable Rules," 29.

[44] *Rihla*, 1:4.

[45] *Rihla*, 1:13–15; 23–24.

[46] *Rihla*, 1:16.

[47] *Rihla*, 2:42 (italics added).

[48] Ghandur, *Tha'r al-dam* [Blood revenge].

[49] Kramer, "Breakable Rules," 31.

[50] *Rihla*, 1:6.

[51] *Rihla*, 2:49.

[52] Kramer, "Breakable Rules," 33 (italics in original).

[53] *Rihla*, 1:5.

[54] *Rihla*, 1:16–17, 25.

[55] *Rihla*, 1:16.

[56] *Rihla*, 1:17–23.

[57] *Rihla*, 2:36.

[58] Henrey, "Palestine Arab Literature," 763; Jarallah, "Da'alat al-intaj," 57.

[59] *Rihla*, 1:2.

[60] "Decision du Haut-Commissaire no. 48," March 8, 1937, Carton 911, Mandat Syrie-Liban, Cabinet Politique, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes.

[61] "Le directeur de la Sureté Générale à Monsieur le Chef du Cabinet Politique," March 3, 1937, Carton 911, Mandat Syrie-Liban, Cabinet Politique, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes.

[62] Mahfuz, *Tahta rayat al-Qawuqji*, 24. Mahfuz refers generically to the way some journalists have described the adventurous journey through the mountains when they were covering the revolt, but without mentioning specific names or titles. Because al-Qawuqji writes that only one Arab journalist came to interview him, it appears likely that Mahfuz referred to the *Rihla*, but that cannot be verified.

[63] *Mughamarati fi jibal Filastin* [My adventures in the mountains of Palestine].

[64] Cf. *Rihla*, 1:24–25, 2:42, and Ghandur, *Tha'r al-dam* [Blood revenge], 70–71, 78–96. On the latter, see Macaluso, "Revolt in the Novel."

[65] Abrahamson and Abusharif, "Literary Journalism," 29.

[66] Wood, "Love, Iranian Style," 72.

[67] [Peel Commission], *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 133; Kabha, *The Palestinian Press*, 160–66.

[68] Kabha, 155–200; Goodman, "British Press Control," 703.

[69] Goodman, 704.

[70] Wagner, "Literary Reportage in the Left-Wing Movement of the 1920s and 1930s," 325–57; Williams, "Reportage in the 'Thirties." Williams's dissertation explores the radical, leftist reportages of the period, specifically in the United Kingdom, but also in other countries.

[71] Gunn, "Three Radicals and a Revolution," 393–410; Stein, "Lincoln Steffens and the Mexican Revolution," 197–212.

[72] Reed, *Insurgent Mexico*.

[73] Reed, "Almost Thirty," 114.

[74] Knudson, "John Reed," 63.

[75] *Rihla*, 2:48.

[76] Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism*, 42, 67–69, 247.

[77] Knudson, "John Reed," 63.

[78] Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 30.

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Humboldt's *Personal Narrative*: A Relation Historic to Literary Journalism

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Abstract: Alexander von Humboldt, 1769–1859, scientific explorer of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, wrote with a rational mind as well as a romantic spirit. Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent during the Years 1799–1804* is a blend of the objective/rational and subjective/romantic, so much so that this work can be considered an early form of science writing in the tradition of literary journalism. *Personal Narrative* reveals that Humboldt drew on and combined his empirical, rational, and romantic backgrounds to inform and inspire the public and his fellow researchers. The strongest case for Humboldt's work being considered an early form of literary journalism is his consistent use of the picturesque, of which his particular use in *Personal Narrative* operates at the crossroads between an Age of Reason and Romanticism. In so doing, Humboldt uses the picturesque to entertain as well as inform his audience. Analyses looking for only objectivity, or only subjectivity, in Humboldt's work fall short because he actively uses both in his writing. His scientific philosophy and epistemology create a dynamic feedback loop between objectivity and subjectivity. Further analysis of Humboldt's work as a literary journalistic piece will shed more light on the methodological holism of his epistemology. Recognizing *Personal Narrative* as an early form of literary journalism opens the door to the works of other authors who were inspired by Humboldt's work to write in ways that could also be considered forms of literary journalism.

Keywords: Alexander von Humboldt – literary journalism – picturesque – geography – science communications

Alexander von Humboldt's multi-volume *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent during the Years 1799–1804* was first published in 1814 through 1825,[1] informed, and inspired the early nineteenth-century public in support of the sciences, much like modern literary journalists who wish to promote the sciences. Communicating accurate scientific material to the public is necessary to counter misinformation on topics ranging from pandemics to environmental issues. Humboldt sought to establish a holistic geography—combining diverse fields of knowledge to produce large-canvas understandings of the world—as a way of research and thought that would lead the future of scientific inquiry and public thought. In his introduction to *Personal Narrative*, he notes "preferring the connection of facts, which have long been observed, to the knowledge of insulated [singular] facts, although they were new, . . ."[2] In making connections between facts, one could find insight, not just new facts, but the understanding of systems. Laura Dassow Walls identifies Humboldt's methodology as "empirical holism," where "the parts, not the whole, are antecedent, and the only way to know the whole is through them."[3] When connected, the individual facts allow people to glimpse the big picture and see beyond their own narrow fields. Humboldt recognized a process of knowing that involved the interaction of the arts and sciences, Romanticism (subjectivity) and Rationalism (objectivity). Humboldt also identified his work generally as "physical *geography*,"[4] and himself as a "geographer."[5] Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* is an early model for a literary journalism where science represents a major theme of subject matters, allowing the arts and sciences to reinforce one another, as opposed to dividing into separate camps. Literary journalism is still developing as a genre and, as John C. Hartsock reports, "Much excavation of the subject remains to be done."[6] By bringing Humboldt's work under the literary journalistic lens—focusing primarily on Humboldt's use of the picturesque in relation to the narrative journey, his epistemology, his geography, and literary journalism—this study argues that *Personal Narrative* can be considered an early form of the genre, warranting further analysis as to how *Personal Narrative* should fit in the canon of literary journalism.

Publishing for the Public and within a Scientific Community

The Prussian-born Humbolt generated an extensive publishing history. Walls, in *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science*, notes that the public held "Humboldt's reputation as one of the greatest minds of the age, and, after Napoleon, the most famous."[7] His major works began with *Relation Historique* (1814–31), a thirty-four–volume work covering findings from his South American expedition that he recorded, with extensive notes, in his journal. He was also known for his lecture-series-

turned-book, *Views of Nature* (1808), which catered to both scientific and artistic audiences of the time. Humboldt's last work was also, originally, a popular university lecture series among academics, *Cosmos* (1845), resulting in five volumes being published before his death, though the work was incomplete. Within *Relation Historique* are select volumes that contain Humboldt's *Personal Narrative*, which is also incomplete.[8]

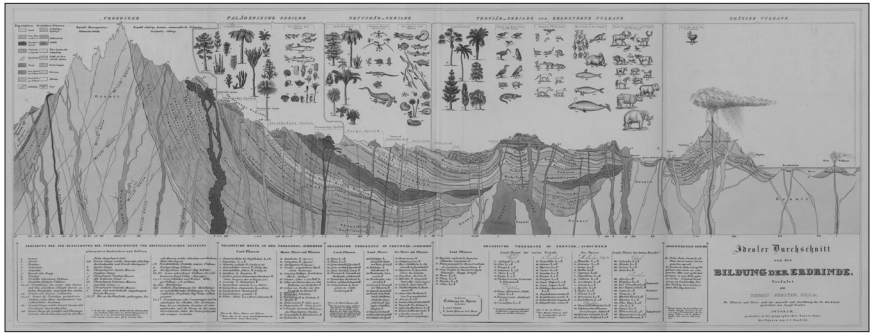
Yet *Personal Narrative*, despite its deficiency, was widely read, and several editions were published during Humboldt's lifetime. *Personal Narrative* was originally published in French, and Humboldt authorized the first translation of *Personal Narrative* to English, with Helen Maria Williams as translator. The completed translations were published from 1822 through 1826.[9] Later unauthorized editions published during Humboldt's lifetime included Thomasina Ross's English translation (1852) as well as a German translation (1818–1832).[10] Though the final products were in book form as volumes, *Personal Narrative* was derived from Humboldt's personal journal. As Walls writes in *The Passage to Cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the Shaping of America*, "His journal . . . is a highly personal record of awe before great beauty, of poetic flights, anxieties, sharp disappointments, and social sarcasms," and thanks to "public expectation (scientific travelers were supposed to make public the narrative of their journey) and by the urging of friends," Humboldt eventually published *Personal Narrative* as a more carefully crafted version of his journal.[11] Humboldt even records the calendar days of events in *Personal Narrative*, as seen in the following passages: "The 20th of June, before sunrise,"[12] and "On the 13th of July we arrived at the village of Cari."[13] The calendar notation of days serves as another way to organize events and ideas, providing a sense of real time of events for the reader. Including calendar dates regularly in *Personal Narrative* also reflects the notation used in his journal out in the field, supporting the felt sense of actual, lived experience fueled by scientific inquiry and active reporting eventually reaching an interested public.

Humboldt, during his lifetime, garnered an international presence. Arron Sachs, in *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism*, reminds readers that natural phenomena, various landmarks, "Colleges, cafés, streets, public parks, and ships were all given Humboldt's name."[14] Humboldt himself possessed a place within an international community of scientists and thinkers. His many connections within this community, among historical figures, included the likes of Thomas Jefferson, Joseph Banks, Charles Lyell, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Louis Agassiz, and Charles Darwin. Humboldt's network of professional connections and how he used them played a role in the development of what would later

become known as Humboldtian science. As Ottmar Ette attests, Humboldt "continued internationalizing his scientific network, thereby becoming a scientific cosmopolitan (or cosmopolitan scientist), . . . We could never imagine Humboldt's conception of science (or 'Humboldtian science') without his cosmopolitism, his 'Weltbürgertum.' "[15] Humboldt would not be Humboldt without the support of his community who, together with the author himself, produced a culture of collaboration from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. Alison E. Martin explains how the scientific culture of this time influenced Humboldt's decision to include in *Relation Historique* "references to [his] place within the scientific community, not least in the preface, where he explicitly thanks fellow scientists for their cooperation and implicitly signals the networks and groups in which he operated."[16] The evidence speaks to Humboldt's former renown and success, even if the twenty-first century has largely forgotten and reduced his legacy to brief notes. Fortunately, thanks to scholars, such as Walls, Sachs, Ette, and Martin, more readers have been reintroduced to Humboldt's work, and further study of his past and present influence continues.

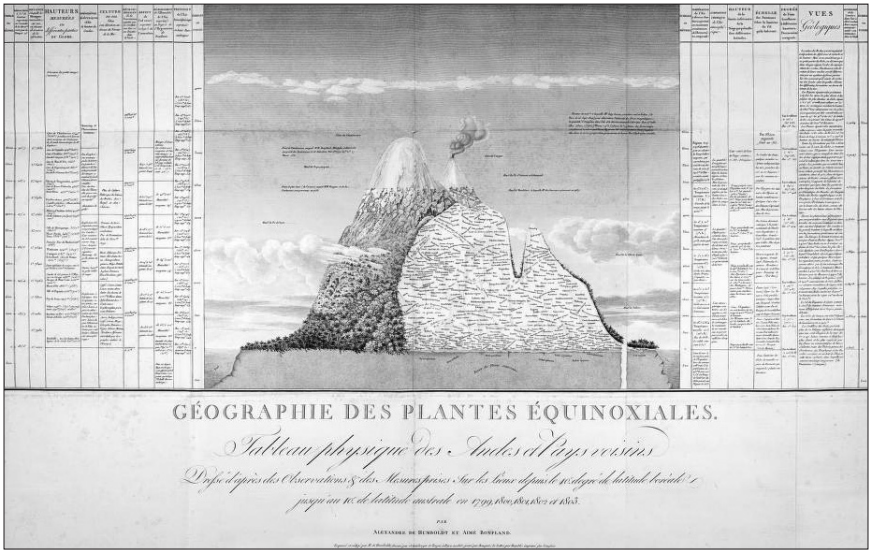
Visualizing Humboldt's Efforts: The World and the Haze

For a visual of how Humboldt's writing can be considered an early form of literary journalism, his own drawings and diagrams speak for his larger epistemology and writing, blending art and science. He used his skills in sketching and drawing to produce and incorporate into his scientific research charts and tables as well as visualizations that explained his findings and theories in ways that text could not. A prime example of this approach is his isothermal lines.[17] Humboldt argued that understanding global temperature patterns required studies supported "by the comparison of a great number of observations, made in different parallels of latitude, and at different degrees of longitude. . ."[18] In a true testament to the visualizations of data,



he created isothermal lines to reveal patterns in temperatures on maps. As Eberhard Knobloch attests, the isothermal lines were based on "mean values" of measurement, using a method that took "two observations every day: the minimum and the maximum, supposed to occur at sunrise and at 2 p.m.," which added up to "730 thermal observations in the course of 1 year" to make the estimate.[19] These lines allowed readers to visualize similar temperatures across the globe as well as future mapmakers to note distinct differences due to geography.

Humboldt also worked on a grand scale in sketching mountains, with a drawing of Mt. Chimborazo gaining fame after appearing in his *Essay on the Geography of Plants*. The diagram, captured on a six-square-foot canvas,



blends text and image in an almost overwhelming way. This image of Mt. Chimborazo, known as Humboldt's *Naturgemälde*, fulfilled the role of multiple forms of communication. Because of the configuration of data and the intentions of the creator, this painting of nature, denoting wholeness, functioned not only aesthetically, but also scientifically. Laura Søvsø Thomasen summarizes the result: "The play with the textual, literary, and visual elements thus supports Humboldt's vision of plant geography."[20] The *Naturgemälde*, in particular, may showcase the limits of public thought and the constant search at the horizons of scientific inquiry. Claudio Minca describes the " '*bruma*' (haze) that envelops things at a distance and that for Humboldt was

the metaphor of every projectual intention: always on the horizon but never accomplished, indeterminate in its furthest contours."[21] Rachael Z. DeLue notes that Humboldt's *Naturgemälde* is "commensurate with the 'very abundance' of the natural world," yet "the image acknowledges its limitations as a vehicle for reintegrating phenomena that have been artificially separated into categories of information and rendered as notation."[22] In spite of the limitations of the image, *Naturgemälde* speaks to Humboldt's epistemology and concept of physical geography often found in his writing. Walls elucidates the bridge that exists, connecting Mt. Chimborazo to Humboldt's writing: "In effect, Humboldt did in language what he had done long ago in his Chimborazo cutaway, his thumbnail Cosmos—he used his double vision to give an aesthetically pleasing image of nature framed, literally, with the supporting reams of scientific data."[23] *Naturgemälde* visualizes the limitations of public thought, while revealing the concept in scientific inquiry related to the interrelatedness of all things. *Naturgemälde* represents Humboldt's own personal pursuit to better understand that interrelatedness. A visualization technique Humboldt frequently used to communicate his ideas was called the picturesque, originally a term in painting that gradually developed into a Romantic movement. Yet, Humboldt's use of the picturesque in his writing results in works that contain the nature of literary journalism.

The Picturesque for Humboldt

The picturesque occurs in both Humboldt's visuals and texts in *Personal Narrative.* The picturesque movement, according to Carl Thompson, was known specifically as "the cult of the picturesque, promoted most vigorously by the Reverend William Gilpin, who from 1782 published a series of 'picturesque tours.' "[24] Gilpin wrote *Three Essays: Picturesque Beauty*; *on Picturesque Travel*; *and on Sketching Landscape* as a response and addition to Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). The signature difference in taste between Gilpin and Burke hinged on the concepts of smoothness and roughness, which, as Gilpin states, "the point lies here: to make an object in a peculiar manner picturesque, there *must* be a proportion of *roughness*; so much at least, as to make an opposition; which in an object simply beautiful, is unnecessary."[25] Capturing the picturesque requires a sense of both smoothness and roughness. The depiction of landscape requires contrast between these two elements, from the jagged mountain peaks to the soft mountain meadows below. Humboldt was regularly presented with opportunities to place what were considered rough and smooth elements together in his writing, just as Gilpin suggests. A clear example of smooth and rough comes from Humboldt's description of the

cave of the oilbirds. The picturesque here relates to the entrance to the cave. Elements which are smooth and rough are found in Humboldt's description of the cave in *Personal Narrative*:

> At the point where the river forms the subterraneous cascade, a hill covered with vegetation, which is opposite the opening of the grotto, presents itself in a very picturesque manner. It appears at the extremity of a straight passage, 240 toises [an outdated French unit of measurement which equals 1.949 meters] in length. The stalactites, which descend from the vault, and which resemble columns suspended in the air, display themselves on a background of verdure.[26]

Humboldt leaves readers with no doubt that what he describes is picturesque. In doing so, he deploys contrasts to describe the scene. The stalactites, which in this case are considered rough, stand in stark contrast to the greenery, which is the beautiful, smooth element that serves as the background for the stalactites. Notice, also, how Humboldt refers to the stalactites as columns, which gives the sense of the picturesque when the cave is then considered to be like an ancient temple.

A bold case of the smooth and rough comes from a boat ride on the Atlantic Ocean, amidst islands off the coast of Cumana. On a small boat, Humboldt in *Personal Narrative* describes how when porpoises "struck the surface of the water with their broad tails, they diffused a brilliant light, that seemed like flames issuing from the depth of the ocean."[27] After speaking further on this phenomenon, Humboldt in the next paragraph of *Personal Narrative* refers to "barren and rocky islands, which rise like bastions in the middle of the sea," with a moon that "lighted up those cleft rocks, bare of vegetation, and of a fantastic aspect."[28] The porpoises themselves are smooth, along with the elements of water and bioluminescence. The rocky islands stand in stark contrast as the rough aspect of the scene underneath the moonlight.

Humboldt describes in a similar picturesque fashion the Caripe Valley (a region in northeastern Venezuela), where the research team spent several nights. Humboldt adds particular details that can be considered both rough and smooth in his description in *Personal Narrative*, stating, "The turf, that is spread over the soil ; the old moss and the fern, that cover the roots of the trees ; the torrents, that gush over the sloping banks of calcareous rocks ; in fine, the harmonious agreement of colours reflected by the waters, the verdure, and the sky ; every thing recalls to the traveller sensations, which he has already felt."[29] Humboldt lists different parts that compose the scene, from the turf (considered smooth) and rocks (rough or rugged). More importantly, Humboldt makes the case for the combined effects of otherwise separate elements.

Smooth and rough elements that contribute to the development of the picturesque correspond and subsume under concepts of the sublime and beautiful, which also were incorporated into the picturesque. Burke evaluates these constructs when he compares objects:

> For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, . . .[30]

Burke strictly applies descriptions of how the sublime and beautiful differ, especially in their causes. For Burke, if elements of either are mixed, then the result is neither sublime nor beautiful. He is adamant in this case, saying, "Black and white may soften, may blend, but they are not therefore the same."[31] Burke, in rigidly applying these distinctions, does not allow for much contemplation beyond his definitions. Gilpin's distinctions were less rigid as he blended both the sublime and beautiful to regularly produce what he called the picturesque. Gilpin made a case for the blending of elements of the beautiful and the sublime to make a picturesque that was distinctly Romantic. For Gilpin the picturesque was pleasing on both counts, allowing an appreciation of the beauty of a landscape, while also appreciating the sublime features of a landscape, with both coinciding in an image to produce the total picturesque effect.

Unlike Burke, Gilpin's emphasis is on views of nature when he uses the picturesque. He considers the picturesque as a style that captures the whole while appreciating the parts, but there is a limit: "To this it is enough, that the province of the picturesque eye is to *survey nature*; not to *anatomize matter*. It throws it's [*sic*] glances around in the broad-cast stile [style]. It comprehends an extensive tract at each sweep. It examines *parts*, but never descends to *particles*."[32] Humboldt appreciated this use of the picturesque for the blending of the sublime and beautiful, because this application of the picturesque neatly coincided with his own project to consider how parts relate to the whole in nature, scientifically and aesthetically. The initial appreciation of nature through aesthetics leads to an appreciation of nature scientifically, for Humboldt.

Often when trying to describe landscapes, Humboldt refers to elements of the sublime and beautiful, underneath the picturesque umbrella. A strong example of this exists in another description of the "Valley of Caripe":

> The aspect of this spot has something in it at once wild and tranquil, gloomy and attractive. Amidst a nature so overwhelming, we experienced only feelings of peace and repose. I might even add, that we are less struck in the solitude of these mountains with the new impressions we receive at every step, than with the marks of resemblance which we trace in climates the most distant from each other. The hills, by which the convent is backed, are crowned with palm-trees and arborescent ferns. In the evenings, when the sky denotes rain, the air resounds with the uniform howlings of the alouate apes, which resemble the distant sound of wind, when it shakes the forest. Yet amid these unknown sounds, these strange forms of plants, and these prodigies of a new world, nature every where speaks to man in a voice, the accents of which are familiar to his soul.[33]

The way Humboldt incorporates such a variety of elements allows him to promote the general holistic view, but also allows him to provide lively particulars which enrich the description. The howler monkeys are in some ways sublime when their voices "shake the forest," denoting power. When he refers to "these strange forms of plants, and these prodigies of a new world," readers grasp a sense of the arabesque. What is "strange" or unfamiliar promotes a sense of wonder, which in this case encourages inquiry.

In this passage, there is a stronger sense of Gilpin's picturesque that blends the sublime and beautiful, and there is even a note of how this scene contributes to Humboldt's own thought processes and conclusions about the natural world. Humboldt refers to how nature in South America makes him think of other regions on the other side of the globe. In doing so, Humboldt supports his holistic view of interconnectivity on a global scale. The depiction of this scene agrees with Gilpin's picturesque blend of the sublime and beautiful. Through the picturesque, Humboldt provides a front row seat to his scientific and personal responses to the environment.

For Humboldt again, the picturesque serves to fuel scientific inquiry. As he states in *Personal Narrative*, "The more imposing and majestic the objects we describe, the more essential it becomes, to seize them in their smallest details, to fix the outline of the picture we would present to the imagination of the reader, and to describe with simplicity what characterizes the great and imperishable monuments of nature."[34] Whereas Gilpin might not agree to capturing the smallest details in descriptions, Humboldt has all the reason to attempt to capture these small details for the sake of his readers. In trying to present fine details on a grand scale, Humboldt shows how the small and diminutive can aggregate to form the big picture of grand scenes. Humboldt expresses the same thoughts in *Personal Narrative* when he reflects on the peak of Tenerife in the Canary Islands:

> An expedition to the summit of the volcano of Teneriffe [*sic*], is interesting, not solely on account of the great number of phenomena which are the objects of scientific research ; it has still greater attractions from the picturesque beauties, which it lays open to those who are feelingly alive to the majesty of nature. It is a difficult task, to describe those sensations, which act with so much the more force as they have something undefined, produced by the immensity of the space as well as by the greatness, the novelty, and the multitude of objects, amidst which we find ourselves transported.[35]

The immensity of accumulated details itself can be considered sublime, as the inundation of information stretches beyond the human capacity to comprehend all the minute details that constitute what appears before the eyes. Human reason is described as being defied by the immensity of the beauty in nature, which is thus sublime. What is sublime and beautiful here contributes to both the arts and sciences, with both reinforcing Humboldt's efforts.

For Humboldt, the picturesque applies not only to nature, but also to people, or people within nature. One example in *Personal Narrative* also comes from the island of Tenerife, when Humboldt describes chapels surrounding Laguna: "Shaded by trees of perpetual verdure, and placed on small eminences, these chapels add to the picturesque effect of the landscape."[36] Humboldt often refers directly to the picturesque in his writing, whether he describes nature or the people who live there. The picturesque contributes to Humboldt's efforts to understand nature and the human places within it, within his holistic geography.

Humboldt's Application of the Picturesque to Geography

Franco Farinelli, in his analysis of Humboldt's application of the picturesque to geography, has commented on Humboldt's interplaying objectivity and subjectivity. For example, in *Blinding Polyphemus: Geography and the Models of the World*, Farinelli argues that Humboldt in his geography creates a blend of the interplay of objectivity and subjectivity that is at times also self-reflective, even self-critical. There are, Farinelli notes, three stages to Humboldt's process of applying the picturesque to geography. The first step, *Eindruck*, "corresponds to the world understood as harmonic totality of the aesthetic-sentimental type."[37] This is immediately recognizable as the Romantic understanding of landscape, with the picturesque in the forefront. The second step, *Einsicht*, "disarticulate[s] the sentimental totality and initiate[s] translation into scientific terms."[38] This is where Rationalism and empiricism play a part in Humboldt's process. The third step, *Zusammenhang*, "means synthesis, the point of arrival, the last term in the cognitive process."[39] Yet, at the point of arrival, *Zusammenhang* also returns full circle to the beginning of Humboldt's process to form a renewed holism reinforced with Rationalism.

Zusammenhang, however, is not the end of Humboldt's process, but rather a new beginning for Humboldt's cycle of knowledge, which continues within an endless feedback loop. As Farinelli notes, "In the language of today's science, Humboldt's *Zusammenhang* corresponds to complexity, indeed, to global complexity."[40] Humboldt was keenly aware of the complexity of the world. Humboldt's three-step process uses the picturesque, as Farinelli describes, and coincides with Humboldt's general approach to science and exploration, to reach a better understanding of that global complexity.

Along with his process, Humboldt also keenly recognized human limitations, and this is where the *bruma*, or haze, sets in again as a point for discussion. Prior to speaking of the haze, however, the concept of landscape must be considered in relation to Humboldt's three-step process. As Minca explains, "Landscape is perhaps the only modern concept that refers to both the thing itself—and to its description."[41] In this context, landscape serves the arts and the sciences. After appreciating the aesthetic whole of a landscape (*Eindruck*), the details of a landscape must be recorded accurately (*Einsicht*), but these details must also be arranged in a way to present a coherent image (*Zusammenhang*), in order for Humboldt to describe what he sees in a landscape and how he describes what is observed in a landscape. The depiction of haze in the landscape is a symbol for human limitations in the pursuit of knowledge or producing a coherent image. Drawing on Humboldt, Farinelli describes the haze as "the image of the 'sensuous infinite,' . . . the fatally incomplete character of what we see, the structurally unfulfilled character of what we know, the programmatically partisan character (even if aimed towards totality) of what we do."[42] Minca harkens to Farinelli when he quotes Farinelli as having stated that the haze represents " 'not . . . a simple atmospheric effect, linked to particular climatic conditions, as one might be tempted to think; it is, rather, a cultural and political effect.' "[43] In this respect, Humboldt is willing to show the human agency involved in the pursuit of scientific knowledge. Humboldt is also willing to show the human agency involved in the construction of meaning when art attempts to frame an endless horizon. Furthermore, Humboldt is willing to show the human agency involved in reporting, describing what is observed and how, as writers do in literary journalism.

In Humboldt's *Views of the Cordilleras*, images serve as both works of art and tools for scientific discovery. Farinelli elaborates on this characteristic: "These colour engravings, in which artistic canon and scientific illustration become one, were the most subtle and incisive instrument of Humboldtian strategy, since the landscape, for Humboldt, coincides accurately with both of these."[44] Employing these images as instruments of "Humboldtian strategy,"

requires volumes upon volumes of scientific data. In turn, countless physical and theoretical tools are needed to collect and organize the data. Humboldt collected and organized the data to produce scientific diagrams that visually informed and appealed to the human eye.

To address his needs, Humboldt carried a complete suite of observational tools throughout his travels. Near the beginning of *Personal Narrative*, Humboldt devotes six pages to a detailed listing of his collection of observational tools.[45] Humboldt was also one of the first to apply statistics to data collected on plant distributions.[46] The statistics served as another tool to analyze the data without blindly accumulating facts. On the surface, Humboldt at times seems obsessed with observable details; in a way he is. Yet, if greater attention is not paid to his overarching aim in collecting mountains of data, readers can easily mistake Humboldt for a simplified empiricist. If people are open to appreciate Humboldt as a whole, they will find that his science is focused on approaching the comprehensive, and his tools are part of the process.

Many scholars, past and present, fail to understand the complexity of Humboldtian science. These scholars have described Humboldt as either a strict empiricist or as an overly idealistic romantic. As Walls states, "he doesn't quite seem to fit in"; and worse, "his followers . . . with few exceptions appropriated from him what was ideologically useful for their own projects and ignored or repressed what they found inconvenient."[47] Upon returning to and bringing a holistic perspective to Humboldt's work, people may begin to appreciate the vision of his approach—which is neither that of the strict empiricist nor the idealistic romantic, but a blending of both. Walls finds

"Humboldt's field method consisted of four principal commandments: explore, collect, measure, connect."[48] Each of the commandments provides clarity for the field method. First, a researcher sees what can be explored. Next, materials must be collected from the field and measured. Finally, what was measured must be connected to what the researcher already knows. Depending on how the researcher interprets what was measured at the connection stage, the researcher may arrive with further questions, and thus more directions for continued research. In *Cosmos*, Humboldt called his methodology "rational empiricism."[49] Science needed an appropriate infrastructure to begin comprehending the world, and Humboldt provided a model for beginning to understand how all the details measured in the world relate to one another to form the big picture.

Humboldt's Picturesque in Relation to Literary Journalism

Humboldt's particular use of the picturesque parallels concepts in literary journalism. Hartsock describes literary journalism as working "on a narrative spectrum or continuum somewhere between an unattainable objectified world and an incomprehensible solipsistic subjectivity."[50] Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* poses epistemological questions to the reader throughout, using elements, such as the picturesque, which relate to this narrative spectrum. After describing objectivity and subjectivity as examples of this spectrum, Hartsock states, "The results reflect profound epistemological and existential consequences."[51] Literary journalism, in straddling the worlds of objective and subjective writing, wrestles with questions concerning what people can claim to know; in turn, it wrestles with the nature of human existence and how humans, as a species, define their place in the universe. Humboldt developed his own theories for where knowledge can be found and how knowledge is acquired in his scientific theory and research methods, wrestling with the same epistemological concerns as literary journalism. For the dual purpose of fueling scientific inquiry and informing the public, Humboldt used the picturesque in his writing of *Personal Narrative*. Thus, this study would argue that his work should be considered part of the history of literary journalism. He provides a traceable tradition for literary journalists who write to support scientific inquiry or address the public on challenging scientific topics.

Distance and Perspective

The picturesque, though often associated with Romanticism, is surprisingly mimetic in the use of distance. As Gilpin suggests in his *Three Essays*, painting is "an art *strictly imitative*," but painting can also be considered "*not* an art *strictly imitative*, but rather *deceptive*—that by an assemblage of co-

lours, and a peculiar art in spreading them, the painter gives a semblance of nature at a proper distance."[52] As a result, there is a concern for the proper framing and perspective of an image in relation to distance. Gilpin encouraged presenting some details in works depicting landscapes but simultaneously warned against too much detail:

> General ideas only must be looked for; not the peculiarities of portrait. It admits the winding river—the shooting promontory—the cattle—the abbey—the flat distance—and the mountain melting into the horizon. It admits too the relation, which all these parts bear to each other. But it descends not to the minutia of objects."[53]

To present the semblance of an image, details must be reduced in volume for coherency of the produced image. Distance serves to provide the limits of detail to a landscape, while perspective dictates the focus of the image.

Humboldt's use of distance to provide perspective throughout *Personal Narrative* relates to two important concepts, which David Eason explores when he argues the two styles of writing found in literary journalism include ethnographic realism (ER) and cultural phenomenology (CP). For Eason, ethnographic realism (ER) assumes that "the relativity of human actions which motivates the reports poses no threats to traditional ways of comprehending and expressing reality," while cultural phenomenology (CP) "seeks to transform what is taken for granted in writing and reading a report into an object of analysis."[54] Humboldt speaks directly to the audience about what he observes, but openly discusses the nature of writing and reporting as well in *Personal Narrative*:

> I was unwilling to interrupt the narrative of our voyage by the detail of the physical observations I made during the passage from the coasts of Spain to Teneriffe [*sic*], and thence to Cumana. Observations of this kind are not really interesting, except when we can dispose their results in such a manner as to lead to general ideas. The form of a personal narrative, and the nature of it's [*sic*] composition, are not well fitted for the full explanation of phenomena, which vary with the seasons, and the position of places. In order to study the laws of these phenomena, we must exhibit them in groups, and not separately, as they were successively observed. We are under great obligations to navigators, who have accumulated an immense number of facts ; but must regret, that hitherto naturalists have made so little use of their journals, which, when examined anew, may yield unexpected results. I shall insert at the end of this chapter the experiments, which I made on the temperature of the atmosphere and the ocean, the hygrometrical state of the air, the intensity of the blue color of the sky, and the magnetic phenomena.[55]

This passage, in keeping with Eason's definition, presents a strong case of

CP. Humboldt explicitly relates the artifice and subjective construction that goes into the personal narrative form and the limitations of the form. He also clearly states how certain details are left out for the sake of constructing a meaningful narrative for the reader. Humboldt even explicitly refers to the importance of finding general ideas from the accumulation of facts for such detail to be useful. Though the previous passage is a case of CP, Humboldt in this passage also explains how the narrative form is constructed in a way that is, at least contextually, ER through the picturesque. In reference to the picturesque and landscape painting, distance is necessary. This is an aesthetic distance which is not unlike ER, in that the mirror concept is not thrown away all together. Rather, the picturesque admits some level of construction in creating a particular, coherent image.

The Picturesque as a Revolving Door

Distance in the picturesque goes hand in hand with Humboldt's tools of observation and measurement. Humboldt himself in *Personal Narrative* refers directly to the picturesque while using distance to construct the image. Humboldt also wants to appreciate landscapes scientifically as well as aesthetically. In describing Tobago in *Personal Narrative*, Humboldt begins with a picturesque effect and eventually breaks down the image into different details:

> The island of Tobago presents itself under a very picturesque aspect. It is a heap of rocks carefully cultivated. The dazzling whiteness of the stone forms an agreeable contrast with the verdure of some scattered tufts of trees. Cylindric and very lofty opuntia crown the top of the mountains, and give a peculiar physiognomy to this tropical landscape. Their sight alone is sufficient to remind the navigator, that he has arrived at an American coast ; for cactuses are exclusively peculiar to the New World, as heaths to the Old. The north-west part of the island of Tobago is the least mountainous ; according to the angles of height, taken with the sextant, the most lofty points of the coast do not appear to exceed 140 to 150 toises. At South-west Cape, the land descends toward Sandy Point, the latitude of which I found to be 10° 20' 13," and the longitude 62° 47' 30." We perceived several rocks on a level with the water, on which the sea broke violently, and we distinguished a great regularity in the inclination and direction of the strata, which dip to the south-west at an angle of 60°.[56]

Humboldt trades the paintbrush for chronometers, barometers, sextants, and the host of instruments previously mentioned. And while he records the data gained from the landscape scientifically (Rational), he also produces his emotional/imaginative (Romantic) response to the landscape through his narrative techniques of language. He is clear about his personal responses to

the experience, while working to commit to scientific accuracy in his observations and measurements.

The term picturesque can consist of two poles, with Rationalism and Romanticism feeding into each other, and Humboldt used the picturesque to contain these two poles as he wrote. A case in point is Humboldt's use of the picturesque, which developed with Romanticism, even though, as Gilpin describes, the picturesque possesses qualities that are also associated with Rationalism (that is, in the literary journalistic sense), such as the aesthetic distance and the implied artifice of depicting a landscape in the first place. For Humboldt, the picturesque simultaneously blends the objective and subjective as it blends the sublime and beautiful. The picturesque represents the grey area between pure Rationalism and pure Romanticism.

When readers join Humboldt on the llanos, Humboldt's description of his thought processes when he and his colleagues arrived at the South American grasslands speaks to his use of the picturesque as a revolving door between Rationalism and Romanticism. He describes the Mauritia palm in detail, a description which serves as the pivot point for his turning or revolving logic:

> The plain was undulating from the effect of the mirage ; and when, after travelling for an hour, we arrived at these trunks of the palm-tree, which appeared like masts in the horizon, we observed with astonishment how many things are connected with the existence of a single plant. The winds, losing their velocity when in contact with the foliage and the branches, accumulate sand around the trunk. The smell of the fruit, and the brightness of the verdure, attract from afar the birds of passage, which delight in the vibrating motion of the branches of the palm-tree. A soft murmuring is heard around ; and overwhelmed by the heat, and accustomed to the melancholy silence of the steppes, we fancy we enjoy some coolness at the slightest sound of the foliage. If we examine the soil on the side opposite to the wind, we find it remains humid long after the rainy season. Insects and worms, everywhere else so rare in the *Llanos*, here assemble and multiply. This one solitary and often stunted tree, which would not claim the notice of the traveller amid the forests of the Oroonoko [Orinoco] spreads life around it in the desert.[57]

In this passage alone, Humboldt references meteorology, in the wind; geology, in the sand; ornithology, in the birds; entomology, in the insects and worms; and the human experience, which enriches the imagination from the very soil in which the palm is planted. Empirically, Humboldt notices specific details near the plant. Rationally, Humboldt concludes that these elements, as noted separately, relate and are connected to the palm. Romantically, Humboldt gives his emotional, imaginative response to the experience. All of this indicates the connectivity of all things and, like the palm, the picturesque

understood this way gives new life to fields of research that need new avenues of inquiry and creativity to move forward. If readers investigate Humboldt's work, they must be careful not to fall into the same binary trap—getting lost in Romantic sprawling jungles or Rational desolate llanos—which doesn't allow the grey area to exist or the revolving door to continue in dynamic rotation.

Writing between Extremes

Humboldt actively used methods and styles representing both Rationalism and Romanticism. M. H. Abrams presents images representing the neoclassical and Romanticism in his own work, *The Mirror and the Lamp*: "The title of the book identifies two common and antithetic metaphors of mind, one comparing the mind to a reflector of external objects, the other to a radiant projector which makes a contribution to the objects it perceives."[58] Humboldt was one of a few individuals from an earlier time in history who willingly used the reflector and projector as a paired resource for writing and research. The mirror can be understood as a representation of objective reporting, or Rationalism, giving the semblance of complete objectivity. The radiant projector, on the other hand, can represent subjective reporting, or Romanticism, where there is no attempt at complete objectivity but rather an explicit portrayal of the reporter's presence in the work. Just as Abrams describes what was happening in the literary world of Humboldt's time, Abrams also provides analogies in the reflector and radiant projector that closely align with ER and CP as described by Eason. Thus Humboldt, caught as he was between the age of Enlightenment and the formation of Romanticism, draws on both movements in his writing. His *Personal Narrative* struggles to find a home fully in one or the other movement, but exists instead, somewhere in between. Existing on the borders of objectivity and subjectivity, in the grey, is a hallmark of literary journalism as found in Humboldt's *Personal Narrative.*

This study would propose that literary journalism exists between two extremes. Joseph Webb argues that "there is no such thing as a pure Rationalist or a pure Romanticist."[59] Trying to find a single case of either in literary journalism represents either an unlikely probability or an imaginative stretch. Rather, both Rationalism and Romanticism constantly feed into each other, within a dynamic and ever-changing relationship. Yet, just as Webb speaks of a gradient from a non-existent pure Rationalism to a non-existent pure Romanticism, so also ER and CP fail to act independent of each other, as both are tools for understanding what can be claimed as knowledge and how to acquire knowledge. William Roberts and Fiona Giles speak of the relationship between ER and CP as "woven together into a complex interrelationship,

[where] neither proceeds independently of the other but rather they merge and overlap, with both working toward the same goal, albeit using different methods."[60] *Personal Narrative* is an immense work that manifests in varying degrees on such a spectrum.

Furthermore, *Personal Narrative* is a self-reflective work, which breaks down conventions of travel narrative. Oliver Lubrich, in "Alexander von Humboldt: Revolutionizing Travel Literature," confirms *Personal Narrative*'s defiance of traditional norms of travel writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: "Humboldt is, by no means, the author of 'totality,' which he is so often seen to be. His writing deals, rather, with the impossibility of grasping foreign reality and presenting it in the traditional forms of (metropolitan) literature. Humboldt's aesthetic is an aesthetic of lost certainty, his poetic is a poetic of de-authorized form."[61]

In breaking with convention, Lubrich offers this concluding thought on Humboldt's work: "[Humboldt] does not simply dissolve the conventional travel report, but replaces it with something new: a different form, which does not simply reprimand conventional practice, but points creatively to the future, towards modern poetics."[62] Hartsock will record another hallmark of literary journalism: "the form resists critical totalization or closure."[63] Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* does not conclude with his and his traveling companions' physical return to Europe as would be expected. The account ends, instead, mid-expedition in Cuba, without narrative closure. Humboldt did not publish a final volume of *Personal Narrative* relating the rest of the expedition, which resulted in sundry inconclusive theories over the years as to why Humboldt decided upon this stark incompleteness; this adds to the sense of the inconclusive present found in literary journalism.[64] Science according to Humboldt will always be, to some degree, inconclusive or incomplete; there will always be more questions, and he makes this point in *Personal Narrative* for his readers. The contention here is that the "something new" Lubrich describes in Humboldt can best be found in literary journalism. *Personal Narrative* is worth further analysis in future literary journalism studies.

The case for Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* as a form of early literary journalism provides a tradition that supports contemporary literary journalists whose work focuses on providing scientific knowledge for the public.

Even Tom Wolfe recognized a tradition for literary journalism that links to works like Humboldt's *Personal Narrative*. Wolfe states, "The sort of reporting that one now finds in the New Journalism probably begins with the travel literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."[65] Humboldt's work itself predates Wolfe's New Journalism by more than a century. Norman Sims recognizes literary journalism as "[a]n exciting and creative genre, . . .

now regularly employed in areas previously avoided by writers with literary ambitions, such as . . . complicated scientific and technical writing."[66] This statement implies the absence of a literary tradition for literary journalists whose works focus on presenting challenging scientific material to the public. Literary journalists like John McPhee, who wrote the grand geological text, *Annals of the Former World*,[67] are working from a tradition that has yet to be fully realized in Humboldt. Even Thoreau, whom Hartsock notes for writing early literary journalism in his book, *Cape Cod*,[68] is indebted to Humboldt when he wrote the misunderstood (unpublished during his lifetime) scientific and literary work, *The Dispersion of Seeds*.[69] John Muir, whom Sachs quotes as saying, "I desire to be a Humboldt!," is another writer working from a Humboldtian tradition, producing scientific travel literature that is similar to *Personal Narrative.* Thus, Muir is also worth considering in a literary journalistic vein.[70] The possible connections are traceable and worth exploring, from Humboldt to literary journalists of the twentieth and twenty-first century, for a literary journalism that does not shy from the sciences but enjoys the challenges and rewards of such efforts to address a wider audience.

Humboldt did not avoid otherwise difficult "scientific and technical writing," but presented scientific material using the picturesque and other literary narrative techniques to create an immersive reporting experience. Humboldt's epistemology and writing in *Personal Narrative*, provides a foundation for literary journalists seeking to address the public on challenging scientific topics: "always on the horizon but never accomplished, indeterminate in its furthest contours." Recognizing *Personal Narrative* as literary journalism sets in motion an opportunity for the academic community to further study and recognize the works that approach the sciences in the spirit of Humboldt and literary journalism.

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Notes

[1] Humboldt and Bonpland, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, during the Years 1799–1804*. *Personal Narrative* is published variously under Humboldt's native German surname, von Humboldt, and the French, de Humboldt. Endnotes for this study use the anglicized Humboldt, as commonly appears in citations of his work.

[2] Humboldt, introduction to *Personal Narrative*, 1:iv.

[3] Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*, 84.

[4] Humboldt, introduction to *Personal Narrative*, 1:iii (emphasis in the original). See also, Walls, *The Passage to Cosmos*, 37, 331n38; and additional sources on Humboldt and geography in Mathewson and Sluyter, "Humboldt in the Americas," special issue, *Geographical Review*, 96, no. 3 (July 2006).

[5] Walls, *The Passage to Cosmos*, 271.

[6] Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism*, 3.

[7] Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*, 97.

[8] Humboldt, *Relation Historique*; Humboldt, *Views of Nature*; Humboldt, *Cosmos*.

[9] Humboldt and Bonpland, *Personal Narrative*.

[10] Wulf, *The Invention of Nature*, 507.

[11] Walls, *The Passage to Cosmos*, 40–41.

[12] Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 1:122.

[13] Humboldt, 6:8.

[14] Sachs, *The Humboldt Current*, 13.

[15] Ette, "The Scientist as *Weltbürger*," 179.

[16] Martin, " 'These Changes and Accessions of Knowledge,' " 46.

[17] Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*, 101.

[18] Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 2:83.

[19] Knobloch, "Alexander von Humboldt—The Explorer," 12.

[20] Thomasen, "Showing and Telling Science," 233.

[21] Minca, "Humboldt's Compromise," 183.

[22] DeLue, "Humboldt's Picture Theory," 39.

[23] Walls, *The Passage to Cosmos*, 223.

[24] Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 48.

[25] Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 5, 25 (emphasis in original); Burke, "*A Philosophical Enquiry*," 49–199.

[26] Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 3:133.

[27] Humboldt, 3:357.

[28] Humboldt, 3:357.

[29] Humboldt, 3:160–61.

[30] Burke, "*A Philosophical Enquiry*," 157.

[31] Burke, 158.

[32] Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 26 (emphasis in original).

[33] Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 3:160.

[34] Humboldt, 5:36.
[35] Humboldt, 1:180.
[36] Humboldt, 1:127.
[37] Farinelli, *Blinding Polyphemus*, 46.
[38] Farinelli, 47.
[39] Farinelli, 47.
[40] Farinelli, 48.
[41] Minca, "Humboldt's Compromise," 179.
[42] Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos. Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*, vol. 1, Stuttgart, Cotta, 1845, 38, as quoted in Farinelli, *Blinding Polyphemus*, 53 (Farinelli's translation).
[43] Minca, "Humboldt's Compromise," 183, quoting Farinelli, *Blinding Polyphemus*, 48.
[44] Farinelli, 51.
[45] Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 1:34–40.
[46] Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*, 81.
[47] Walls, *The Passage to Cosmos*, 33, 22.
[48] Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*, 98.
[49] Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 49. The term "rational empiricism" appears in Otté's translation of Humboldt's *Cosmos*.
[50] Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism*, 247.
[51] Hartsock, 247.
[52] Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 29 (emphasis in original).
[53] Gilpin, 85–86.
[54] Eason, "The New Journalism and the Image-World," 63.
[55] Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 2:48–49.
[56] Humboldt, 2:28.
[57] Humboldt, 6:7–8.
[58] Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, viii.
[59] Webb, "Historical Perspectives," 40.
[60] Roberts and Giles, "Mapping Nonfiction Narrative," 112.
[61] Lubrich, "Alexander von Humboldt: Revolutionizing Travel Literature," 380.
[62] Lubrich, 380.
[63] Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism*, 70.
[64] Walls, *The Passage to Cosmos*, 46.
[65] Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 50.
[66] Sims, "The Art of Literary Journalism," 3.
[67] McPhee, *Annals of the Former World*.
[68] Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism*, 23; Thoreau, *Cape Cod*.
[69] Richardson, "Thoreau's Broken Task," 10; Thoreau, "The Dispersion of Seeds," 23–173.
[70] Sachs, *The Humboldt Current*, 27.

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"Writer's Studio" Q&A, Brown University. Screen capture of Zoom session by Doug Cumming.

Scholar-Practitioner Q & A . . .

An Interview with Dan Barry*

Tracy Breton
Brown University, United States

Doug Cumming
Washington & Lee University, United States

Dan Barry has been a writer at the *New York Times* since 1995, working as a city reporter, national reporter, sports reporter, and columnist. He has published several nonfiction books and won numerous awards for his *Times* stories, which he has filed from all fifty states. Barry has a gift for emotionally powerful stories about common people enmeshed in the news. In an essay that *Times* reporter Sarah Lyall published in March 2021 about what she has missed being exiled from the *Times* building for the past year, she wrote: "I miss how, no matter what time you leave the office, Dan Barry always seems to be at his computer, agonizing over another sentence. I miss the little fish in his little fishbowl who lived in one of the meeting rooms on the third floor."[1]

On February 8, 2021, Barry was featured in a Q&A "Writer's Studio" for Brown University's Nonfiction Writing Program. In a ninety-minute Zoom session with a score of undergraduates, six professors, and five of his former colleagues from the *Providence* (Rhode Island) *Journal,*[2] Barry answered questions led by Tracy Breton, one of those former colleagues and professor of the practice who leads the journalism portion of the Nonfiction Writing Program in Brown's English Department.[3]

Barry explained the foundations of his approach to narrative nonfiction. One of these was his parents—a mother from Ireland who would ask him to

* Material from Brown University, Nonfiction Writing Program's "Writer's Studio," Q&A interview with Dan Barry, February 8, 2021, used by permission.

mow the lawn by taking fifteen minutes to tell a story, and a father who was poor and unlucky in life, but smart, well-read, and funny. "I would say his default emotion was anger and a sense that the bullies had the upper hand in society." Barry himself developed an enmity for bullies. "It's hard to believe, looking at me now," Barry says with characteristically self-effacing sarcasm, "but I used to be a scrawny kid who got beat up a lot." And, finally, he credited the way his early ambitions as a "smart-alecky," wannabe Hunter S. Thompson were humbled and matured by years of local daily news reporting, especially his four years at the *Manchester* (Connecticut) *Journal-Inquirer*. He also earned journalism degrees from St. Bonaventure University and New York University.

"Journalists, particularly journalists that are starting out, forget how much power they have over another person's life or story," he says. "When you start out, you forget that the name you're typing into the computer is an actual human being, and it's kind of easy to maintain that distance between a printed name and an actual human being. I think at least in my case, as I grew older, I had a much keener appreciation for the human being behind the name and being then very careful with the adjectives I would use . . . and also making sure that when people gave me the gift of their story that I treated it as such, that it was a fragile gift and that I did right by them in telling their story fairly and accurately."

During the Zoom session, four particular stories came up for explanations of origin and craft. One of these was "Circle Line Somberly Views Altered Skyline" (2001),[4] a poignant perspective on 9/11. Another was "The Lost Children of Tuam" (2017),[5] which is about a woman who persisted in learning about babies buried in a Catholic home for unwed mothers. Another was "The Case of Jane Doe Ponytail" (2018),[6] a co-written investigation into the life of an undocumented Chinese prostitute who fell to her death during a police raid. And finally, there was "The Epicenter" (2020),[7] about two weeks and six characters at the early explosion of Covid-19 in Queens, an 11,450-word montage he and a colleague spent eight months working on, following the model of John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, which itself was modeled on Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.[8]

Here are those portions, edited for clarity:

Tracy Breton: Some of my favorite stories you've written about are those where you zig instead of zag—that's the term that Jerry Lanson [Barry's writing professor at New York University, who was in this Zoom session] taught me—you manage to find these angles or perspectives to report on that other reporters overlook. For example, the story you did about the corpse that you

found in New Orleans that was lying on the street,[9] or after 9/11, you decided to go to the place where they were taking all the remains,[10] and what the Circle Line was like after 9/11,[11] and the story about that little town in Upstate New York where the factory was getting shut,[12] which meant that the whole town was going to die [financially] as well. Are you always thinking in kind of universal themes like love and hate and loss and hope and resilience when you're seeking out stories, or are you just trying to find angles that no one else is writing?

Dan Barry: First, I studied under Jerry Lanson at NYU. He put up with me, that's for sure. Zigging instead of zagging, right. I don't like people. [Deadpan. Faint smile.] No. I don't like being in a media scrum, okay? I don't like being with others trying to do the same thing. Whenever I can, I break apart from the crowd. I'm always challenging myself to tell a story that might be familiar in a new way. An example of that is the Circle Line.

Less than a month after 9/11—those of you who were in New York at the time will remember—it was a profound sense of trauma, and disbelief, and *we'll never get past this*. If you remember, Graydon Carter [editor of *Vanity Fair* at the time] said it was the end of irony.[13] Well, that didn't turn out to be the case. But it did feel like it was the end of something, and there were questions about whether New York would ever recover, and so, of course, slowly, the city began to.

So on the day of 9/11, I got into New York City. I live in New Jersey. I got into New York City by driving like a mad person to the Hudson River. I had to dump the car. I ran down a hill, and the Circle Line, which usually goes around Manhattan Island—it's a tourism attraction—now was ferrying people from Manhattan into New Jersey, including people who didn't live in New Jersey—they just needed to get the hell off the island. And so, 600 people would be on the Circle Line coming to Weehawken, and then it would go back, and there would be six people, the crew. And so I ran through the crowd as they were disembarking and asked the captain if I can get a ride over to Manhattan, and he said, "Knock yourself out." So I was on the Circle Line as it went back to Manhattan, and as we looked, it paused in the middle of the Hudson, waiting for a berth to open up, and you could see the funeral pyre down at the bottom of the island. And so, that's how I got into Manhattan.

The next few days were a blur, and then, a few weeks later, I'm trying to think of how to tell this story of Manhattan, how to tell the story of New York in a new way, and I remembered the Circle Line. And I checked, and they had just begun to resume their tourist attraction rides around the island. So, what's that like? They have to go past Lower Manhattan. They have to go past the Battery Park area. What are they saying? How do they incorporate in their patter, you know, what happened?

So I took that ride. It was twenty years ago that I wrote it, but what I remember most of all is that as the Circle Line was passing the smoke and what was called the Pile—and then became the Pit—there was a couple next to me, and they had been taking photographs a while and when they came to that moment in the ride, the gentleman put his camera down and he said it's too sacred to photograph. That's how my mind works. I can't help it. It's a fevered mind, but that's how my mind works—to look at what everyone is looking at, but in a different way. Try to find a way to tell it differently so that it becomes fresh again so that we don't become inured to someone blowing a hole in the bottom of Manhattan.

Olivia George (student): I was hoping you could chat a little bit about the story that you wrote on the mother and baby home in the west of Ireland. Specifically, I'm wondering just how you came across that story. I know your mother is Irish, but if you could talk a little bit about how you decided that was something you wanted to write about. And the second question, I was hoping you could chat about how you decided on the first sentence, "Behold a child." I mean, it's this big sprawling, intense story, and I'm just wondering, at what point in your writing and reporting process, that sentence that seems so simple and so powerful came to you as the place to start the story.

Barry: Thank you so much for even remembering the first three words. Right, my mother is from Ireland, from County Galway, and I've spent a lot of time in Ireland. Tuam is maybe 40 minutes from where my mother was born and spent her childhood. I read a lot about the case.

Ireland has been going through a real painful reckoning with its past for the last few years because, similar to the Magdalene Laundries that maybe you've heard about, beginning at the formation of the Republic of Ireland out from under British rule in the early 1920s, this new government was trying to figure out what to do with all sorts of issues, including social services. At the time, it was a heavily Catholic country, so what do you do with women who become pregnant out of wedlock? Well, you know, we have to hide them from the rest of us, because it's a shame; it's shameful. So, these institutions were set up where young women, oftentimes who were unwed and were pregnant, would go until they gave birth. It's a horrific thing. Not all of them were run terribly well, let's put it that way. In one institution, the death rate of these babies and young children was off the charts, and in this facility, which was a converted poorhouse dating from the 1850s, the nuns didn't know what to do with the bodies and, for whatever reason, they buried them in a retired septic system. They wrapped them in cloth and buried them in these tunnels beneath the facility that were once part of the septic system.

This became known because of one woman who didn't go to college. She was a local woman, and she was trying to do a feature story for the local historical magazine. She couldn't make sense of the numbers. Well, where did all these dead babies go? So that led her on this incredible journey of investigation where she determined that some 800 bodies, perhaps, were buried in the septic system.

I read a lot about it before going there, and I was, quite frankly, unimpressed with how this woman, Catherine Corless, was being presented. I didn't think she was coming across as fully realized. I wanted to know what motivated her. Why did she continue to pursue this even though the local newspaper was giving her a hard time, even though the local Catholic Church was giving her a hard time and lying to her, why does she keep going? And she agreed to talk to me. So the story, it's as much about this heroic woman as it is about the actual scandal itself.

As for the opening, "Behold a child," honest to God, I must have been taking hallucinogens. I don't know how that came. It seemed to me that I wanted to evoke a break in the sacred trust. I wanted to evoke something faintly biblical. You know, it sort of sounds a little like the Beatitudes. And I was trying to figure out how to begin it and, you know, you don't want to begin, "When Catherine Corless was seven years old, she . . . ." I don't want to do that. I took a step back, and took a long walk, and then came up with that. I was very glad that the editor didn't cut it. You know, "Behold a child." Because it's about the children, it's about the loss of the innocent and the loss of a country to innocence in a way, right?

Marina Hunt (student): I have a few questions about the story that you wrote about Song Yang, which I spent maybe an hour reading. It was an incredible story to read. There are so many parts to it, so many different people involved, so many different angles into the life and death of this woman, and so I'm wondering how you began your reporting and then how you proceeded. And also, one specific thing I'm wondering about is how you structured the piece. How did you decide when to tell the reader that she had died? You wait a few sections before you arrive to that.

Barry: No. She dies in the beginning, doesn't she?

Breton: Can you explain what the story was about?

Barry: Sure. This story that Marina is referring to is about a woman named Song Yang, who was a Chinese immigrant who wound up working in the massage parlors in Flushing, Queens, not too far from "the Epicenter." That business had become such that women would stand out in the street and advertise for massages, which was really a cover for prostitution. There was nothing hidden about it. This entire street was taken over by this industry.

I got interested in it because one of the tabloids had written a brief story about it and the headline was something along the lines of "Fleeing Cops, Prostie Leaps to Death." Quite frankly, Marina, I got pissed off. I didn't like the word *prostie*; I didn't like a life reduced to that word. And, by the way, I've never heard the term prostie before, you know. It was a late-night tabloid headline person's decision to label her as a prostie. I got pissed off, and that's how I got involved in it.

Well, who was she? And what is this world? Why is this okay? What drove her to this profession? I'm not making a judgment of whether it should be legal or illegal. It is, at this time, in New York illegal. But who was she? I mean, that's the overarching question. How did she fall out or jump out of a window, and why? Well, the reason was the police were coming to arrest her again. They were coming up the stairs. She heard them knocking on her door, and she either slipped or jumped out the window rather than deal with the police. That would have jeopardized her hopes for a green card. That's what was happening.

I don't speak Mandarin, and I look like a cop, so I teamed up with another reporter named Jeff Singer, who is unbelievably fluent in Mandarin and also had many connections in the Flushing Chinese community. So, gradually, mostly through Jeff, we were able to insinuate ourselves into that world and hear the stories of women like Song Yang and where they came from and how they wound up doing this work rather than having them be these anonymous women on the street calling after men as they walked to the train.

As for the opening, I think, Marina, I describe her falling. Then we suspend her in mid-air and then provide context, and then she falls. The narrative trick was, okay, this woman, we're not going to be cute about it. This woman died, okay. And then we retell the story. It's almost like a film noir technique that you'll see in movies from the '40s, where the climax, in a weird way, is at the beginning, but you then are wondering—Well, how did it come to this point?—so we retell the story.

Breton: Going back to the story, could you talk about the process that you and Jeff had in gaining the trust of the sex workers and also how you were able to earn the trust of Song Yang's family when they came to try and understand what had happened to their loved one.

Barry: As I said, I look like a cop or a dissolute, so I don't enter easily into the world of Mandarin-speaking sex workers in Flushing. Jeff, who was fluent, and I spent a lot of time on the street trying, buying bubble tea in the summer and buying hot tea in the winter, because they would be out at two in the morning soliciting or calling out, "Massage, massage," and so that really wasn't going very far. But I got a sense of how fluent Jeff was. He's a schlubby

guy from Staten Island. He and I would go to lunch, and he would order the food for us, because the waiters were often only speaking Mandarin and his fluency and his command of the vernacular and the slang and the way to speak was the opposite of academic and formal. He was very good at how people speak in Mandarin. And people would stop with their eating and look at him and compliment him and joke with him, and he would joke back with them.

So this came to bear one night when we were trying to ask a couple of women some questions. Also, we're disrupting their work, you know? If men were inclined to avail themselves of their services, it's not going to happen with these two knuckleheads standing there, right? So it was hard. So Jeff was trying to talk to a couple of the women, and another woman came over. She was like the boss lady in this little area, and she said, "If you're so good, where am I from?" And Jeff said, "Well, say a few more words." And she did, and he was able to pinpoint not only the province she came from in China but the city and almost the exact neighborhood where she came from, because there are different ways of speaking, similar to the way there are different dialects in New York, or there used to be, right? All the other women started laughing in appreciation and in wonder, and he was in. They invited him up for hot pot, and they talked to him constantly, and opened up to him, because they trusted him. And that's how we were able to do that.

Breton: When her family came over to try to discover what really happened to her and, obviously, they didn't trust that she had taken her own life, how were you able to gain their trust? You really captured not just her life but their frustration, too, and who they were as grieving family members.

Barry: We spent a great deal of time with them. The son, Song Yang's brother, spoke English, which was good for me so that I could be very active in those conversations.

I'll tell you the truth. At the very beginning, the son was convinced that the police had thrown his sister over the railing, and he was determined to prove that. I'll tell you that when I first looked at this story, that was absolutely among the options I was considering, because I didn't know what happened. I'm not going to assume that the police acted admirably, and I'm not going to assume that they acted horribly. I was open to that possibility, and so, in a weird way, the three of us, Jeff and I and the brother, were trying to investigate what happened. We developed a relationship as that went.

It became clear to me early on that the police hadn't thrown this poor woman over the railing. They had surveillance video showing what happened. But her brother refused to believe it. And he got upset with us that we weren't solving the case for him and proving that the police had killed his sister. There was nothing we could do with that, and we were not cute about it. We told

him, well, you know, Song Hai, we haven't been able to find that. But he came to terms with that. And, I have to tell you, in April of 2020, when New York was going through the craziness of the pandemic, of all people, Song Hai sent me a note from China to see how I was doing and wishing me well and saying he was worried. It was unbelievable.

Breton: I would like to spend a few minutes talking about the most recent narrative re-creation that you wrote for the *Times*, called "The Epicenter." It took eight months. It's 11,450 words. You chronicled what was happening to people who were really sick with the virus. You ended up at one of the hardest-hit hospitals in March and early April, and how Covid affected this diverse community of immigrants in five interlocking communities in Queens. This is a micro-world you capture, where there are 800 languages spoken among the immigrants who live there, many of whom are undocumented. So, this is a huge drawing board. I'd like to know, first, what was the genesis of this story, and how did you come to center it on these people or families that you were looking at?

Barry: This is my tip of the hat to Tom Heslin [one of Barry's former editors at the *Providence Journal*, who was in the Zoom meeting]. Every time I speak in public, I tip my hat to Tom.

If you remember in late March, so much was going on. We'd just come off the impeachment. There was the presidential campaign. It was, let's say, contentious. And there were so many things going on, on top of which there was a pandemic. Things were happening so fast it felt like we couldn't pause to consider what had just happened to us. This is how I felt.

Then in late March, the pandemic really hit Queens, and it lived up to its etymology in a way, right, because Queens is the world. Famously, thirteen people died in twenty-four hours at Elmhurst Hospital, which really was the first time that the United States understood that we have a pandemic here. This isn't just Wuhan, China. This isn't Italy. This isn't a nursing facility in Washington State. This is going to be hellzapoppin'.

So, a couple of weeks later, I was looking for something to do. I was overwhelmed by it, and I was looking for my way into this story, and I remembered John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, right, where he went back and really wrote the work that allows us to understand the human toll of that day—of that action. I said to Cliff Levy, who is the editor of the Metro Desk at the *Times*, we need to slow it down. That's Tom Heslin's phrase that he taught me almost thirty years ago: Slow it down. Go back.

And so, I suggested, why don't we go back to Queens in the neighborhoods around that hospital? We know that it's incredibly ethnically diverse. Pick a geo-specific stretch of mile along the 7 [Flushing] Train, which is a

subway—which is an extraordinary story in and of itself, the 7 Train—and use that as a spine with the hospital, and then find people weaving in and out of this defined space, including those who wind up going into the hospital and not all of them coming out. In other words, to try to figure out a way to make it alive, that you're experiencing it.

We did a lot of research, through knocking on virtual doors at first. And also looking at Facebook pages, GoFundMe pages, all sorts of social media avenues where there would be memorials or there would be money raised for a family who had lost a breadwinner.

We also wanted it to be reflective of what the experience was. The Bangladesh community was getting hammered. A lot of Bangladesh men drive the Uber cars and the taxis in New York, and that industry was being hit hard. People who are living in subdivided apartments where people that are doubling or tripling up in small, one- and two-bedroom apartments because of the economy—and imagine trying to be socially distant in a two-bedroom apartment where ten people were living like that.

So how do you do that? We thought about various ethnic groups, and we reached out to community advocates and politicians, and then we drilled down. I went to Queens several times, and, at the same time, we were working on the hospital to let us in. Finally, they consented. So, through a combination of bearing witness and going into the apartments and going into the hospital, but also doing a lot of work by phone because of the pandemic, we were able to recreate some approximation of what several families were going through at that time. So that's what happened.

Breton: So how did it work? You were working with another reporter on this.

Barry: Right. I worked with a wonderful reporter, named Annie Correal, who speaks Spanish, which was very important, and so we just divvied it up. I focused on the small funeral home director, who was overwhelmed with the dead. Everything was turned upside down. There was no place to put the bodies, so I focused on the funeral home director. I focused on a couple, a Thai chef and his partner, and drilled down on their experiences. I focused on a former Buddhist monk from Nepal who was an Uber driver. Annie focused on a family where eleven people were living in one apartment, and she focused on Yimel Alvarado, a woman who was a cabaret singer. She's in the lead of the story. She doesn't feel well the night that she's performing, so there's a sense of foreboding.

So we divvied up the responsibilities and then collaborated. Annie would write pieces; I would figure out where it went, and we would synthesize it as we went. It's two weeks in a specific place, and you follow these people as they go in and out of this area.

Breton: So when you were doing the writing, you guys were communicating by Zoom? Because you weren't sitting in the same room writing, right?

Barry: No, we were not. I would write drafts and re-drafts and re-re-drafts, and Annie would make suggestions, and then I would synthesize her suggestions. We had, you know, many, many Zoom conversations to try and make this work. It was difficult, it was challenging, but we had to bear witness, and so we went there.

Breton: Obviously, with these kinds of interviews, which are so intense and so intimate, you're not doing those interviews by Zoom. You've got to be there in person, and to create a sense of place, you've got to be there yourself as well, right?

Barry: Right. There was a lot of interviewing done by telephone. But then, after some things were addressed or some information was collected, then we would go to the apartments and spend time with the people and, say, for example, have Joe Farris show me his apartment and where his partner Jack had collapsed, and so I could recreate it in a granular way. So not only am I using my cell phone. I have to say, it took me a couple of years to realize that I could use my cell phone for journalistic purposes. Like, I was so trained to write everything down, and then suddenly I said, well, I could just take a photograph of it. But even then, I'm still madly taking notes, because if I'm writing about the hospital emergency room, for example, sure, I can take photographs, but I'm also taking notes, because I want to remember what things remind me of, so later on in the writing process, if I want to describe the gurneys that are in the hall, maybe I came up with a metaphor that was possibly usable. I want to write it down. So I have photographs, but I also have my contemporaneous notes, where my mind is open to association and ways to make it real for the reader.

Breton: And how were you able to reconstruct so much detail?

Barry: We created a Google Doc. It had notes in it, also what Mayor Bill de Blasio was saying. It was chronological, and it had specific dates. So then, under those dates from our reporting, we knew what Dawa Sherpa—the former Buddhist monk—was doing on this day. We knew what Yimel Alvarado was doing on this day, and we would have also what Mayor de Blasio said that day, what the CDC announced that day, what Donald Trump said—Donald Trump, who actually grew up maybe six miles from this hospital, I mean it might as well have been the moon compared to the lived experience in this neighborhood from where he lived in Jamaica Estates, but he lived very close to this facility in this neighborhood—and so we had that huge Google Doc and then my job was to come up with the opening scene that will draw you in so it doesn't read like another Covid story. We landed on Yimel Alvarado

performing in a cabaret that is *mostly filled with absence*, right when the full import of the coronavirus is being realized in Queens.

Breton: In your mind, what makes for a great story or, at least, what captivates your interest to jump in?

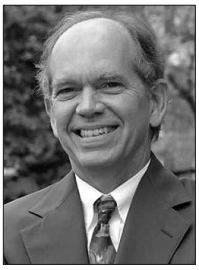
Barry: I'm driven by curiosity. I'm actually interested in a lot of things, so curiosity is always at play. I look through the tabloids in New York for what I might consider to be missed opportunities or if I look at a news story in the *Times* to see if there's something that could be teased out of it. The essential ingredient has to be some kind of tension, some kind of challenge, something to be overcome or dealt with. Once I see that, then I imagine myself in the skin of the person who is confronted with this challenge. And then, if that person will agree to allow me to question them, I will debrief them to a fair-thee-well, so that they feel as though I'm within their skin, so that, when I'm writing about the moment, I can make it as real as possible.

One example is from "The Epicenter." There was a guy named Joe Farris, and he was a partner with a man named Jack Wongserat. Jack succumbs to the pandemic in hospital, and Joe has to fill out the DNR [Do Not Resuscitate] and then Jack passes away in front of him, and then there is some paperwork that needs to be dealt with, and then his loved one is wheeled away, and so you could say, "And then Joe Farris went home." Right? So there was more to that, wasn't it? I had him walk me through what he did after that moment, and I was so grateful that he would talk to me, you know, someone who's grieving, and then reliving that loss, for my benefit, in a way.

He stepped out onto the street in Queens. It's a late afternoon and a cold, March day, and he's in frigging Queens and, yeah, he walked home. But he's suddenly profoundly alone, and I asked him what he was feeling at that moment, and he effectively said, "Everything and nothing." And so I interviewed him about that, and then I walked his walk home—he lived about a half mile from the hospital—three or four times so I could know what he passed, and I tried to imagine what that must have been like. I know that, in that longform narrative, a lot of people have paused at that moment, because it was so raw and human and relatable. So that's what I try to do.

> But right now there is just Joe Farris alone, walking home through the gray afternoon. He heads down 41st Avenue, past a Spanish pharmacy, a Chinese church, and the old Lutheran church where people of Sherpa heritage are assembling Covid care packages.
>
> He is in shock, his mind a jumble of every thought and no thought. All he knows for certain is that a pandemic in Queens has claimed his love. — "The Epicenter"[14]

Tracy Breton is professor of the practice in the English Department at Brown University and leads the journalism portion of the Nonfiction Writing Program.



Doug Cumming is associate professor emeritus at Washington and Lee University. He is the author of The Southern Press: Literary Legacies and the Challenge of Modernity *and a 2013 article in this journal on the late Southern journalist Marshall Frady.*

Notes

[1] Lyall, "A *Times* Writer on Missing . . . the *Times*."

[2] Formerly the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, the Pulitzer-Prize winning, Rhode Island newspaper dropped *Bulletin* from its name in 1998 and is now known as the *Providence Journal*. Parker, "Times Have Changed, but Mission Remains the Same," *Providence Journal*, July 20, 2019, para. 33.

[3] Barry, "A Conversation and Q&A with Dan Barry."

[4] Barry, "Circle Line Somberly Views Altered Skyline," 1, 34.

[5] Barry, "The Lost Children of Tuam," 1f.

[6] Barry and Singer, "The Case of Jane Doe Ponytail," 1f.

[7] Barry and Correal, "The Epicenter," 1f.

[8] Hersey, *Hiroshima*; Wilder, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

[9] Barry, "Macabre Reminder: The Corpse on Union Street," 1, 23.

[10] Barry and Waldman, "The Landfill: At Landfills, Tons of Debris, Slivers of Solace." A1, B11.

[11] Barry, "Circle Line Somberly Views Altered Skyline," 1, 34.

[12] Barry, "A Mill Closes, and a Hamlet Fades to Black," 1, 25.

[13] "The death of irony" idea following 9/11 is often attributed to Graydon Carter's quote in the now-defunct site Inside.com, around Sept. 17, 2001: "There's going to be a seismic change. I think it's the end of the age of irony." But the idea has many sources from the time. Randall, "The 'Death of Irony' and Its Many Reincarnations," para. 2.

[14] Barry and Correal, "The Epicenter."

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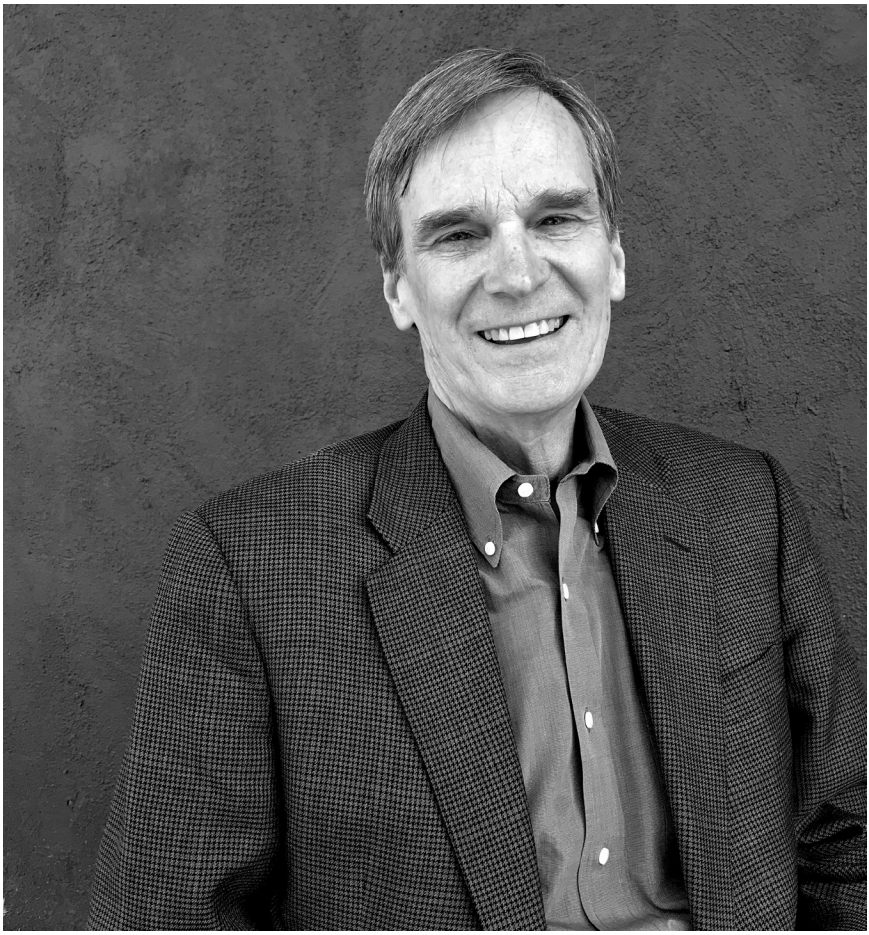
Book Reviews . . .

Nancy L. Roberts, Book Review Editor



Author Berkley Hudson (Courtesy of University of North Carolina Press)

The Jim Crow South in Pictures, but Not Many Words

Brian Gabrial
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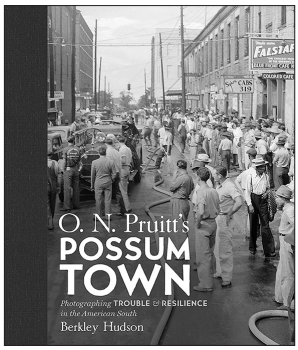
O. N. Pruitt's Possum Town: Photographing Trouble and Resilience in the American South by Berkley Hudson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022. Photographs. Selected Bibliography. List of Photographs and Illustrations. Index. Hardcover, 272 pages. USD$49.95.



In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag said, "Photographs furnish evidence."[1] The evidence in Berkley Hudson's *O. N. Pruitt's Possum Town: Photographing Trouble and Resilience in the American South* is forty years' worth of a small town's early twentieth-century life, captured by its "picture man,"[2] Otis Noel Pruitt. The town in question is Columbus, Mississippi, and the images range from the mundane to the extraordinary, from the tame to the shocking, all taken in the segregated South and documenting the lives and deaths of Columbus residents, both black and white. Hudson, a native of Columbus, began curating this collection as a decades-long labor of love. He hoped it would accurately represent life as it *really was* in this small Mississippi town just west of the Alabama border. That Hudson achieved that goal is attested by the editors of the Documentary Arts and Culture Series of Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies, to which *O. N. Pruitt's Possum Town* is a 2022 addition. They describe the photographs and Hudson's accompanying narratives as "stand[ing] as a visual record and expression of wider truths about the cultural history of the American South."[3]

Columbus, a town best known as the birthplace of playwright Tennessee Williams,[4] was nicknamed Possum Town after the man who ran a trading post on the site and who, according to legend, looked like a possum.[5] As for Pruitt, he was not only a commercial photographer, taking wedding photos and family portraits, but also a photojournalist when the occasion called for it. Hudson, the son of local business owners, said his task was "to bring to public light these visual stories of trouble and resilience"[6] that Pruitt captured on film. Hudson had more than 88,000 surviving negatives to select from,[7] leaving him with an even greater task of uncovering/recovering stories behind the images. In this, his efforts find only partial success because

Pruitt, who took some remarkably good pictures, kept remarkably bad records. Thus, the bulk of the book's photographs possess little contextual information, their history lost. From portraiture to fox hunts to town disasters like fires and floods to at least one horrific lynching, Pruitt shot it all, capturing what James Agee called the "normal predicaments of human divinity."[8] But, as in the case of the lynching photograph discussed later, they also left a visual record that Sontag would say "incriminates"[9] Columbus for its part in Jim Crow violence and social injustice.

In considering a book like this, it is worth returning to Agee, who called *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* "the effort . . . to recognize the stature of a portion of unimagined existence, and to contrive techniques proper to its recording, communication, analysis, and defense."[10] Agee and Walker Evans worked separately in that effort. And, for most literary journalism scholars, Agee's prose became the object of their analysis, with Evans's photographs seemingly an interesting, visual addendum. Regardless, the book challenged readers and critics to accept this amalgamation of the written and visual. A 1941 *Time* magazine review called it "the most distinguished failure of the season," recognizing that it was "an experiment in communication: 'an attempt to reproduce and analyze the actual.' Its medium: 32 photographs by Walker Evans and a 471-page commentary by James Agee. Subject: the life of three Alabama cotton tenant families, with whom the authors spent several weeks (as "spies") in the summer of '36."[11] Likewise, Hudson's book can be considered his and Pruitt's "experiment in communication" and, given that literary journalism scholars are becoming more expansive about what they see as worthy of study, it merits review. (Graphic nonfiction works, like Art Spiegelman's *Maus* or Joe Sacco's *Palestine*, for example, are recognized as legitimate examples of literary journalism, as are song lyrics and poetry. Certainly, visual media must be considered, too.)

"Photographs are portals to the imagination, and vessels of elusive truths," Hanno Hardt observed.[12] Thus, a photograph can be, on its face, one thing while belying deeper, hidden meanings. In photographs, we often see what we want to see and bring our own truths to interpretations of images. That is how I approached Hudson's book, relying less on his narratives about the photographs and more on the photographs themselves to imagine stories about their subjects. Pruitt's photographs of the everyday, the mundane, had me thinking most about the stories behind the faces, wondering what happened to these people. On pages 119 and 120, for instance, two basketball teams pose. In one, six young women from Columbus's Hunt High School's basketball team stand smiling for the camera. They are black. On the following page, ten others from Macon High School, about 30 miles south of Columbus, do the same. They are white. I assume that the young women from Hunt High School lived different, harder lives than the young women from Macon High School. This was Jim Crow South, after all. Whether I am right I will never know because the only information about that photograph is that it was taken "circa 1950s."[13] No other captions or notes are provided. What is clear is that my own knowledge of that time fed directly into my interpretation of what I thought of the lives those Hunt High School athletes had. What were they thinking? What happened to them?

Another photo presents the casually posed image of a young, black man sitting

on a barrel and holding a broom.[14] He is professionally lit, and the camera captures a face that exudes sweet gentleness. Hudson provides backstory here, revealing that the young man's name was Oscar West, known as "Humpy," and he worked as the "cleanup boy" for a local car dealership. Hudson learns West's story from a ninety-plus-year-old member of the family that owned the dealership. She describes West as an "honest, good soul," which is what the photograph conveys. Hudson's source connected him to one of West's children, a son who had never seen the photograph and had no knowledge of why Pruitt took it. As the man "looked at his father," Hudson wrote, "he cried."[15]

For his photojournalism, Pruitt was in demand. In July 1935, he received a call from the sheriff, notifying him of the lynching of two black men. At the scene outside of town, Pruitt saw the bodies of Bert Moore and Dooley Morton hanging from a tree. The two had been "accused of harassing a white woman."[16] This photograph,[17] this record of incrimination, assumed another gruesome life on a postcard. The preeminent African-American newspaper the *Chicago Defende*r also published it, noting, "as long as our white citizens insist upon . . . taking such pictures as these to sell as souvenirs of their barbarity, it is our duty to present them to you."[18] Hudson explains how, years later, a black woman approached him, wanting a copy of it, telling the author that she heard about the lynching and how her husband, then a five-year-old child, remembered seeing the hanging bodies. After speaking with Hudson, the woman refused his offer to give her a print of the photograph. Research failed to find any surviving relatives of either Moore or Morton.

As appalling as the lynching photograph is, another, a photograph of a black man's final moments before his hanging outside of the county courthouse, elicited greater pathos in me. This condemned man, James Keaton, looks directly into the camera with a slight grimace or smile and a pleading look of disbelief.[19] "Under the best of circumstances, photographs constitute a conspiracy of purposes," Hardt observed, "without knowledge or understanding the social or cultural context in which they are always created, photographs may seem deceptively simple visual expressions, or else they become intricate and complicated observations of individuals with particular insights into biography and history."[20] We do not know why Keaton was to be hanged, but the photograph shows him, in the last minutes of his life, surrounded by grim-looking white men. It is a haunting image, but an incomplete one. About this, Stuart Culver observed that a photograph "comes into being as a fragment violently cut out from a larger whole and never complete in itself."[21]

So, if the book suffers, it is because the majority of photographs, like this one or the women's basketball players, appear as story fragments with no context, no narrative of the story behind the image. While the book provides a list of photographs, for the most part, they are without the "off-frame world that hovers around the edges of the picture."[22] Some readers might find this off-putting. For me, however, once I accepted this limitation, I was free to supply the "off-frame world," construct my own narratives about the photographs of the faces and places in this town.

This is a beautifully bound, coffee-table-ready book for which the University of North Carolina Press took great care in the publishing. The 194 pages of photographs

fill the majority of the book's 272 pages. There is an organizational problem, however, as the photographs appear randomly placed, in no particular order or chronology, leaving the viewer to make order out of them. Perhaps Hudson intends to let this sweeping visual record speak for itself or, perhaps, he had no choice thanks to Pruitt's exiguous records. The narrative components, when they appear, are written in clear and deliberate fashion. While it is tempting to compare these to Agee's in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, it cannot be done. Agee was writing about his own lived experiences in that book, of course, whereas Hudson can only surmise what a dead photographer was thinking or feeling as his camera's shutter snapped. In a somewhat satisfying way, the lack of accompanying narratives and seemingly random photographic placement work in the book's favor because the images are the focus. Importantly, what this visual record reveals, and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* did not, is the everyday lives of Possum Town's black community, who are always a part of a Southern town's life and should have been visible in the Agee-Walker book but were mostly in the background. Here, they share the foreground, which, according to Hudson, would have been unusual for a Southern white man like Pruitt to do this because it might have been seen as going against Jim Crow's racial order in creating such normal representations of black lives.[23] His portraits gave his subjects dignity, grace, and "resilience." While no evidence from Pruitt explains his intentions, his photographs suggest that he saw grace and beauty in all his subjects, black and white.

Finally, can this book be of interest to literary journalism scholars? Perhaps not in any conventional sense, but, if the scholar can accept what Hudson, a former magazine and newspaper editor and now emeritus associate professor of journalism, intended in this "photobiography"[24] of a small-town Southern photographer, it should. Columbus, Mississippi, was not Mayberry, North Carolina, and this visual review of its life shows that it was not. Still, these pictures let the reader/viewer know that black people and white people did live together, and most people—black and white—were just trying to get by as best they could, going to the grocery store, going to the dance, going downtown. Sontag remarked that:

> photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing. Finally, the most grandiose result of the photographic enterprise is to give us the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads—as an anthology of images.[25]

While this particular "photographic enterprise" shows but a small piece of the world, it is an important piece for U.S. citizens, letting them know that, even at a difficult and dangerous time for many of their fellow citizens, grace and happiness was also within their reach.

Notes

1 Sontag, "Plato's Cave," 5.
2 Hudson, O. *N. Pruitt's Possum Town*, 1.
3 Dilworth, Hogan, and Rankin, "Editors' Note," xviii.
4 Hudson, *Possum Town*, 3.
5 Hudson, "Suqua Tomaha or Possum Town," in *Possum Town*, xvi.
6 Hudson, *Possum Town*, 2.
7 Hudson, 3, 5.
8 Agee and Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, xiv.
9 Sontag, "Plato's Cave," 5.
10 Agee, preface to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, xiv.
11 "Experiment in Communication," unsigned review of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 104.
12 Hardt, "Constructing Photography: Fiction as Cultural Evidence," 476.
13 Hudson, *Possum Town*, 119.
14 Hudson, 53.
15 Hudson, 51–52.
16 Hudson, 154.
17 Hudson, 161.
18 Hudson, 155.
19 Hudson, 160.
20 Hardt, "Constructing Photography," 477.
21 Culver, "How Photographs Mean: Literature and the Camera in American Studies," 191.
22 Culver, 191.
23 Hudson, *Possum Town*, 1.
24 Hudson, 1.
25 Sontag, "Plato's Cave," 3.

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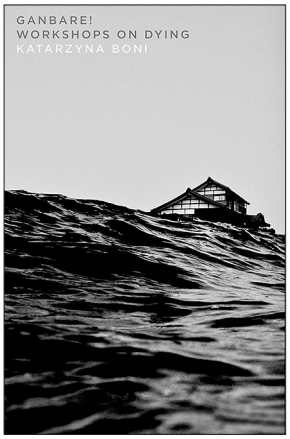
A Triple Catastrophe Leavened by Beauty and Pleasures

Ganbare! Workshops on Dying
by Katarzyna Boni. Translated from the Polish by Mark Ordon. Rochester, New York: Open Letter, 2021. Sources. Paperback, 296 pp. USD$16.95.

Reviewed by Beth Holmgren, Duke University, United States



Katarzyna Boni (1982–) represents a new cohort of female Polish reportage writers who now travel as widely in pursuit of their subjects as their male counterparts have for decades. Boni's first book marks this change in progress: *Kontener* (Container, 2014), which examines the lives of Syrian refugees in Jordan, was coauthored by Boni and Wojciech Tochman (1969–), a well-established reportage writer whose work has led him to the Philippines, Rwanda, and Cambodia. Thereafter, Boni's solo debut, *Ganbare! Workshops on Dying* (2016), emerged from the several years she spent traveling and doing research in Japan, where, according to her website, she tracked the aftermath of the March 11, 2011, earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant. As Boni explains in lieu of a preface, *Ganbare!*—a Japanese exhortation rendered as "Give it your all! Hang in there! Fight! You can do it!"—is "the most commonly repeated word in Tōhoku, the northwestern region of Japan destroyed by the tsunami" (5), featured on billboards, in the press, and public speeches. Boni's *Ganbare!*, tempered by its sobering subtitle, is at last available to English-language readers in Mark Ordon's superb translation. The Polish edition netted its author the 2017 Gryfia Prize, a Polish national literary award for women writers.

Boni's coverage of Japan's "triple catastrophe" (269) is a remarkable achievement—carefully contextualized, masterfully plotted, and stylistically deft. In contrast to reportage writers who organize thematic mosaics of unattributed quotations from their interviews with witnesses and survivors, Boni strives for a clearly embodied, sensorily rich, regionally attuned presentation of how the Japanese in Tōhoku experienced these catastrophes and coped with their psychological and material losses. In her acknowledgments, the Polish writer thanks a wide variety of Japanese experts and volunteers who helped her in this process, from directing her to specific witnesses to translating copious interviews (269–75). It is as if Boni, an "avid scuba diver," (https://katarzynaboni.com/en/about-me/) has opted to make selective deep dives into topics and stories accompanied by an experienced cohort who know the murky terrain very well.

First and foremost, Boni immerses her readers in the religious culture of northwestern Japan, with its distinctive views on the relationship between the living and the dead. She sets the stage in her brief first chapter, evoking summer nights in Japan's isolationist Edo period (1603–1867) when locals gathered around low tables lit by a hundred candles to play "A Hundred Tales of Horror." Cooled by the night air and accompanied by "croaking frogs and buzzing cicadas," each teller of a terrifying ghost story would blow out one candle after their turn: "People believed that the ghosts would appear in their midst when the last candle went out" (11). Lest we dismiss this scene as a parlor trick, Boni's later chapters elaborate on Japanese belief in the importance of the dead's proper burial in order to shut the gate between living and dead (70–74) and Japanese fears about ghosts who may be caught between the two worlds because their bodies have not been found, or they left unfinished business in life, or their loved ones cannot let them go (134–35). Boni relates these beliefs and fears, as well as the existence of *kami* or local deities worshipped in Shintoism, *kami*—local deities worshipped in Shintoism—as matters of fact, without skepticism or sarcasm. She lists the Japanese names for the *kami* and entire categories of ghosts; she meticulously itemizes their physical attributes and superpowers.

Boni also familiarizes readers with the history and landscape of Tōhoku, considered the "back coast" by those in Tokyo, "an agricultural region which has been said to supply the capital with rice, soldiers, and prostitutes" (39). Resisting Tokyo's condescension towards its provincial supplier, she harks back once more to the Edo period, when the famous haiku poet Matsuo Basho finally dared to visit the wild, ungovernable, incomprehensible North in 1689. Boni imagines his reaction through her own observations: ". . . words cannot convey all the views, all the vast spaces, branches twisted in the wind, deep valleys, gentle slopes, forest trails, ragged shoreline, bamboo groves, rice fields in shades of neon green, the stone *torii* gates hidden between the trees, which lead to the Shinto shrines where the *kami* live" (63).

Ganbare! Workshops on Dying is divided into two sections relatively equal in length, followed by a short epilogue that at long last introduces us to the experience of its subtitle. The first section focuses on the tsunami's destruction of people, animals, towns, and forests, and the frantic, and eventually dogged responses of the survivors (11–135). Its chapters portray the desperate hunt for human remains in the sodden wreckage of buildings and deep down on the seafloor; the cherished recovery of objects that attested to the dead's past before the tsunami swept away all its traces (cellphones, business cards, damaged photographs); the survivors' relocation to temporary housing built with plastic windows and shared metal walls that kept out neither sound nor cold; and the efforts of monks from all sects and schools to help the despondent displaced get back on their feet by setting up mobile coffee shops and inviting survivors to complain, talk, and, eventually, grieve.

Boni cleverly shifts from tsunami-related tales to the second section's stories about nuclear power and disaster by revisiting the 1954 screen debut of Godzilla, the monster who breathes fire, shakes the ground, and feeds on radiation. She provides a brief history of Japan's eventual embrace of atomic power energy plants roughly a decade after the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A chapter titled sim-

ply "Boom!" plays out the intense five-day drama—enhanced by inserted dates and times—of the tsunami's unexpectedly deadly impact on the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, the consequent meltdown of three nuclear reactor cores, and the release of a radiation cloud that affected villages in a forty-mile radius. Given that the Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company were long reluctant to disclose this information, Boni's subsequent account relies extensively on the testimony of activist Kenta Satō. (In her acknowledgments, Boni notes that she talked for more than twenty hours with her obliging source.) Satō loved his village of Iitate in the Tōhoku region and planned to raise a family there so that his kids could relive his own golden childhood. After March 11, 2011, however, he quickly educated himself about becquerels and sieverts, decided to sign up for a Twitter account, and began posting that Iitate and its famous produce, dairy, fish, and wildlife were poisoned by nuclear fallout (203). When Boni met him, Satō had been serving nonstop as a witness about what was happening—at conferences, seminars, workshops, and on radio and television. He longed to found a museum about the nuclear disaster so he would "no longer have to talk about it" (206). (The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum was opened in September 2020 in the town of Futaba.)

It bears noting here that the grim, painful aftermath of the triple catastrophe Boni represents in *Ganbare!* is also leavened by her attraction to Japanese beauty and pleasures, and her appreciation for her colleagues' vivacity and generosity. To a large extent, these feelings shape her choice of narrative construction and style. For example, in both sections, Boni mourns loss with a similar rhetorical format in which her sensorily indulgent evocation of what *was* overwhelms the austere sentence(s) declaring its erasure or contamination. In the first section, the city of Rikuzentakata is richly remembered and summarily canceled (13–15). In the second section, her description of the village of Iitate elicits a natural paradise that we are more likely to remember than the evil, time-limited spell of its radioactivity.

> Hillsides, mountain streams, green rice fields, and river rapids in valleys. Wild boars, monkeys, and deer. The air filled with the scent of grass from pastures. Wooden houses with tatami mats and sliding paper walls. Even the cell-phone network was poor here. If you wanted to talk to a neighbor, you would take a walk through the woods rather than pick up the phone. Iitate. One of Japan's most beautiful villages.
>
> But you're not allowed to visit it. (192)

Perhaps most moving are Boni's chapter-long recordings of Japanese interviewees to whom she cedes the microphone. Boni's most charismatic subject in the first section is Grandma Abe, the woman who runs the temporary fish market in Onagawa after the tsunami. Boni, the reporter, functions solely as Grandma Abe's guest—plied with the best seafood delicacies along with Abe's emphatic suggestions on how to prepare them. Here, local food and food culture show Boni (and us) how a resourceful woman is reviving her devastated world and urging customers to savor one consumable pleasure of life. In the second section, an elderly group of *hibakusha* (those who survived the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts) treats Boni to the best food and drink in a restaurant, pairing different sakes with delicious hors d'oeuvres (142). Their eager recommendations and consumption at once enable and form an essential

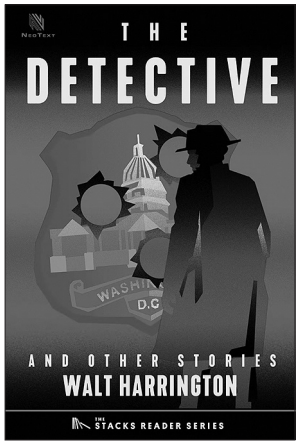
counterbalance to the horrific memories that they almost casually interject between placing more orders.

In the de facto epilogue that introduces section 3 of *Ganbare!*, Boni includes us in a workshop on dying, an exercise in which we symbolically cast off the things, places, activities, and people we most cherish as we absorb a monk's chillingly realistic account of our dying up to the point of death. Yet the many stories that Boni has related, recorded, and arranged for us in her marvelous book perhaps have prepared us to offer well-considered answers to the monk's final questions: "You did not die. That was not your last breath. So what will you do with your life? And what will you do with the twenty treasures that are most important to you?" (264).

A Literary Journalism Master Collects His Work

The Detective: And Other True Stories
by Walt Harrington. The Stacks Reader Series. Sager Group, 2021. Paperback, 116 pp. US$14.99.

Reviewed by Nancy L. Roberts, University at Albany, State University of New York, United States



Anyone who has taught literary journalism and magazine and feature writing over the past twenty-five years knows Walt Harrington's germinal textbook, *Intimate Journalism*, as a bible for students of longform writing. Harrington is a master craftsman who worked both as a staff writer for the *Washington Post Magazine* and as a University of Illinois professor (and head of the journalism department). To the ten books he has written or edited, Harrington now has added this gem, a collection of eight of his *Washington Post Magazine* pieces from 1986 to 2011 that stand the test of time.

Dedicated "to the memory of Matt Harrington, my son and my friend," the book will inspire both students of literary journalism and practitioners alike. It's hard to identify a single favorite in this anthology because the subjects are equally compelling and the research and writing impeccable. "The Detective" gives a fascinating, inside view of a black homicide cop's daily challenges, evoking not only the hard physical work of investigating murder cases, but its concomitant mental and emotional drain: "His numbed heart is but an early warning" (23).

In "The Reverend Comes Home," a final illness brings an aged, once-powerful community icon into the care of his daughters. Harrington gives us a finely limned picture of the way of all flesh. Unavoidably we must face the "bittersweet blessing" (77) represented by the older generation's demise, a kind of rehearsal for our own.

"The Mystery of Goodness" explores the Christian agape that propels a young Harvard Law School graduate, Bryan Stevenson, to forsake money and prestige to rescue those sentenced to the death penalty. "The people who end up on death row are always poor, often Black," Stevenson tells Harrington. "And almost always they had bad lawyers—real estate lawyers who never handled a capital case and who had to be dragged screaming into the courtroom. In one case, the judge actually sent the defense lawyer out to sleep off a drunk" (59). But it's not just simple outrage at racial and economic inequalities that motivates this young lawyer. Harrington's multifac-

eted investigation concludes that the lawyer's compassion and decency flow from a cavernous well of spirituality. Stevenson's "deepest mission . . . is not to save the lives of convicted men, but to live in such a way that his own life is a question posed to others" (73).

"Born to Run" and "Dubya and Me" explore the lives of the forty-first and forty-third presidents of the United States, respectively. The first begins:

> George Bush is a political phenom in reverse. He has made a life of mythic proportions seem somehow trivial, and he cannot understand why. He was the most lovable boy, always. President of his class at prep, president of everything else, too. Never a bad word about him. A war hero—not like John Kennedy, but an undisputed war hero. Skull and Bones, Phi Beta Kappa at Yale. Cushy job offers up the ying-yang. George said no. He packed his wife and infant son into an old, red Studebaker and hit the road for god-awful, rough-necking West Texas—and drilled a fortune in black gold. Then Congress, the U.N., China, the CIA, Saint Reagan's veep. Most Americans view him darn favorably too, according to the pollsters. So why the mean quips? "There's no there there." Why the David Letterman gag lines? Why the *Doonesbury* attack on his manhood?" (123–24)

Profiling the Bushes and other figures such as Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks, and Jerry Falwell over the years has undoubtedly led Harrington to this perspective on history, that it "is composed of significant and less significant moments, the trouble being that we often don't know at the time which is text and which is footnote. Yet when it comes to presidents, even footnotes are worth recording" (148). His nuanced profile of "Dubya" benefits from this scrupulous fact-gathering.

"A Narrow World Made Wide" communicates the complex mystery of artistic creation as practiced by Rita Dove, a former U.S. poet laureate. Step by step, Harrington reveals Dove's creative process: "Rita is loose now, playing—with words, images, punctuation, enjambment and stanza size. She writes a line, walks out onto it, looks ahead, continues or steps back, tries another. For the first time, she can hear the rhythm of her poem before its words are written, as in a song that doesn't yet have lyrics" (44). Here Harrington gives us a most insightful account of literary creation, illuminated by his personal understanding of the craft of writing.

Aptly, Alex Belth's introduction to the book starts with this quotation from Harrington's book, *Artful Journalism*:

> The artfulness required to do intimate journalism is not mostly a God-given skill, but craft. It's crucial to think that way. Otherwise, we make the mistake of assuming that some people just have the knack. Some people do have the knack, but much of artful journalism, whether or not it is about ordinary people, is simply hard work. (xxi)

Sage advice indeed, especially for our students who struggle to realize their own agency as writers.

Both learners and masters of literary journalism will find much of interest in Belth's introduction, a Q&A interview with Harrington that begins with his description of his high-school self as "kind of a knucklehead," until the school newspaper adviser asked him to succeed as editor his successful older sister (xxvii). That first

interested him in writing, though he first studied sociology in college, eventually earning a master's degree in that subject, followed by another in journalism. Harrington recounts early influences from reading *Esquire* and *Rolling Stone* and writers such as Jimmy Breslin, Hunter Thompson, Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, and Joan Didion. Also key to his development was David Halberstam's work, especially *The Best and the Brightest*, as well as Robert Caro's *The Power Broker* and Bob Woodard and Carl Bernstein's *Final Days*. "Reading these books I realized that journalism could be more than bureaucratic political coverage; it could actually be unraveling the human dimensions of power politics and policy" (xxviii).

The final piece, dating from 1987, showcases Harrington's multifaceted talent in a moving essay on fathers and sons. Here, he shares what he calls "a startling insight: If I am still resolving my feelings about my father, then when I was a boy my father was still resolving his feelings about his father" (173). As Harrington demonstrates, this generational tie is durable and influential.

Mission Statement
Literary Journalism Studies

Literary Journalism Studies is an international, interdisciplinary blind-reviewed journal that invites scholarly examinations of literary journalism—a genre also known by different names around the world, such as literary reportage, narrative journalism, the New Journalism, *nuevo periodismo*, reportage literature, literary nonfiction, narrative nonfiction, and creative nonfiction—focusing on cultural revelation. Published in English but directed at an international audience, the journal welcomes contributions from different cultural, disciplinary, and critical perspectives. To help establish comparative studies of the genre, the journal is especially interested in examinations of the works of authors and traditions from different national literatures not generally known outside their countries.

There is no single definition of the genre, but the following descriptions help to establish a meeting ground for its critical study:

• "The art and craft of reportage—journalism marked by vivid description, a novelist's eye to form, and eyewitness reporting that reveals hidden truths about people and events that have shaped the world we know." —*Granta*

• "Reportage Literature is an engagement with reality with a novelist's eye but with a journalist's discipline." —Pedro Rosa Mendes, Portugal

• "I think one of the first things for literary reportage should be to go into the field and to try to get the other side of the story." —Anne Nivat, France

• "A good reportage must not necessarily be linked with topical or political events which are taking place around us. I think the miracle of things lies not in showing the extraordinary but in showing ordinary things in which the extraordinary is hidden." —Nirmal Verma, India

• Literary journalism is a "journalism that would read like a novel . . . or short story." —Tom Wolfe, United States

Such definitions are not comprehensive and may at times conflict, but they should help to establish an understanding of this fundamentally narrative genre, which is located at the intersection of literature and journalism.

At the critical center of the genre lies cultural revelation in narrative form. Implicit to the enterprise are two precepts: (a) that there is an external reality apart from human consciousness, whatever the inherent problems of language and ideology that may exist in comprehending that reality; and (b) that there are consequences in the phenomenal world, whether triggered by human or natural agency, that result in the need to tell journalistically-based narratives empowered by literary technique and aesthetic sensibility. Ultimately, the emphasis is on the aesthetics of experience.

International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies is a multidisciplinary learned society whose essential purpose is the encouragement and improvement of scholarly research and education in literary journalism (or literary reportage). For the purposes of scholarly delineation, our definition of literary journalism is "journalism as literature" rather than "journalism about literature." Moreover, the association is explicitly inclusive and warmly supportive of a wide variety of approaches to the study and teaching of literary journalism throughout the world. The association's web address is http://www.ialjs.org.

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