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Between fact and fiction: a detailed study of the ‘literary’ in investigative journalism with reference to Dan Morse’s “The Yoga Store Murder”

Т.К. Кавья ✉, В. Monika Nair

SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Republic of India
✉ kavyathg@gmail.com

Abstract. Literature and journalism are two field of study that has been a never-ending discussion throughout the history. The two fields, regardless of being considered as separate entity, has its association in the course. This paper dwells into the two fields together, that is, on literary journalism and how literary journalism examines the blurring of boundaries between narrative writing and factual reporting through comparison of select works of narrative nonfiction. The text analysed is a novelistic piece, “The Yoga Store Murder” (2013) by Dan Morse. The study confronts the reluctance to acknowledge this form of reportage as authentic and reliable because its literariness is misconstrued as compromising the objectivity of the piece. The authors also examine how literary journalism fits within the rubric of both literature and journalism. The study addresses the following research questions: where do fact and fiction meet in literary journalistic narratives? how do we navigate questions of authenticity, reliability and journalistic integrity in narrative journalism? The questions will be attempted to be answered with a detailed analysis of a text of investigative journalism that is also nonfiction writing, though literary in nature.

Keywords: journalism, fiction, nonfiction, investigation, reporters

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Между фактом и вымыслом: подробное исследование «литературных» журналистских расследований со ссылкой на книгу Дэна Морса «Убийство в магазине йоги»

Т.К. Кавья ✉, Б.М. Наир

Институт науки и технологий SRM, Каттанкулатур, Республика Индия
✉ kavyathg@gmail.com

Аннотация. Литература и журналистика – две научные области, которые на протяжении всей истории вызвали бесконечную дискуссию. Эти два поля, несмотря на то что они рассматриваются как отдельные объекты, ассоциируются друг с другом. В исследовании

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довании рассматриваются обе области одновременно, а именно литературная журналистика и то, как она стирает границы между повествовательным письмом и фактическим сообщением, посредством сравнения избранных произведений научно-повествовательной литературы. Анализируется роман Дэна Морса «Убийство в магазине йоги» (2013). Отмечается нежелание общества признавать данную форму репортажа как аутентичную и надежную, поскольку его литературность ошибочно истолковывается как компрометирующая объективность материала. Изучается, как литературная журналистика вписывается в рамки литературы и журналистики. Ставятся следующие исследовательские вопросы: где встречаются факты и вымысел в литературно-журналистских повествованиях? как решать вопросы аутентичности, надежности и журналистской честности в повествовательной журналистике? Предпринята попытка ответить на эти вопросы с помощью подробного анализа текста журналистских расследований, которые представляют собой документальные произведения, хотя и литературные по своей природе.

Ключевые слова: литература, журналистика, художественная литература, документальная литература, репортеры

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Introduction

We can't write the beautiful narrative stories that we all dream of unless we can get some things from the mouths of our sources. They must be comfortable enough to tell us anything. In journalism school, no one called the interactions between journalists and sources relationships, but that's what they are.

*Wilkerson, "Telling True Stories"*¹

We are familiar with journalistic narratives, but little do we about the process behind the creation of a journalistic piece. We take for granted the objectivity of journalistic narratives. However, an alternate mode of journalism, referred to as 'literary journalism'², challenges the centrality of an objective style of narration to journalistic reportage. What is it? How is it that literary journalists are able to give authentic information without resorting to an objective tone and style of narration? How literary journalism different from traditional or conventional jour-

¹ Research. (2021). In B. Wielechowski, *Introduction to Narrative Journalism*. UM-Dearborn Open Education. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://oer.pressbooks.pub/narrativejournalism/chapter/chapter-2-research/>

² Athitakis, M. (2012, June 7). Critical views on literary journalism. *National Book Critics Circle*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.bookcritics.org/2012/06/07/critical-views-on-literary-journalism>; Keeble, R.L. (2018, July 30). Literary journalism. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.836>; Myers, D.G. (2012, May 4). Literary journalism: What it is, what it is not. *Commentary Magazine*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.commentary.org/d-g-myers/literary-journalism/>

nalism? What is this style of subjective reportage that is popular among journalists and writers of fiction alike, even as early as the mid twentieth century as seen in the works of Gabriel García Márquez and Truman Capote?³

Literary journalism is acknowledged by a few more names, such as new journalism⁴, docufiction, immersion journalism, and narrative journalism. The term is also used interchangeably with creative nonfiction. The term ‘new journalism’ was coined by an English poet and cultural critic, Matthew Arnold, in 1887 which defined an entire genre of newspaper history. The term was later codified and popularized by author Thomas Wolfe, an American author in the 1960s and 1970s, in his anthology of journalism, *The New Journalism*⁵, and in several other articles published by the author. A piece of literary journalism unites elements of the genre of journalism and narrative literature. This genre intends to convey a factually accurate story, using carefully researched and gathered pieces of evidence from various reliable sources. ‘Literary journalism’ is a form of nonfiction that unites facts with narrative techniques and a stylistic approach traditionally aligned with fiction. Today, the literary journalistic style is adopted in narratives published across media, both digital and print.

Thomas B. Connery defines *literary journalism* as “nonfiction printed prose whose verifiable content is shaped and transformed into a story or sketch by use of narrative and rhetorical techniques generally associated with fiction.” Through these stories and sketches, authors make a statement or provide an interpretation about the people and culture depicted. Norman Sims adds to this definition by suggesting that the genre itself allows readers to “behold others’ lives, often set within far clearer contexts than we can bring to our own.” He suggests that “there is something intrinsically political and strongly democratic about literary journalism, something pluralistic, pro-individual, anti-cant, and anti-elite” (Sims, 2008). W.G. Nicholson says that New Journalism is an essential response to the television era, which threatened print journalism as well as fiction. Nicholson quotes Clay Felker, the editor of *New York Magazine*, saying, “We had to do something television could not do. It was not enough to give interpretation. We had to give style, too”.⁶ However, how did it all start?

Discussion

Historical background. According to Norman Sims, author of the seminal *The Literary Journalists* (1984): “I think you should look to the 1970s or 1980s in the US for the true start of literary journalism as a discipline. *The New Journa-*

³ Marquez’s “The Chronicle of a Death Foretold” (1981) and Capote’s “In Cold Blood” (1966).

⁴ *New journalism – criticism. Technology trends.* (n.d.). Retrieved November 25, 2023, from https://www.primidi.com/new_journalism/criticism

⁵ Wolfe and the new journalism. (n.d.). *Chicago Public Library.* Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.chipublib.org/wolfe-and-the-new-journalism/>

⁶ Feuerherd, P. (2018, September 28). How Truman Capote advanced the new journalism. *JSTOR Daily.* Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://daily.jstor.org/how-truman-capote-advanced-the-new-journalism/>

lism made such a splash that lots of journalism departments started teaching courses on the subject in the seventies (as they will in the future on ‘fake news,’ probably)” (Sims, 2008). Literary journalism owes its beginnings to the 16th century, with Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, popularly known as Lord of Montaigne, one of the most significant philosophers of the French Renaissance. He was the first one to popularize essays as a literary genre. His essays unified casual anecdotes and autobiography with intellectual insight. One of the finest art critics in the history of English Literature, William Hazlitt wrote about Montaigne in his essay, “On the periodical essayists.”

The style and spirit of Montaigne’s essays were echoed by Steele in his *The Tatler* publications in 1709, followed by Addison and Steele’s combined work *The Spectator* (1711). Both the journals focused on issues and concerns of the eighteenth century and the English public. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele’s publications functioned not only as a news reporting medium but also as an entertaining look into their period’s attitudes, tastes, and styles. *The avowed intention of The Tatler was to present accounts of gallantry, pleasure, entertainment, poetry, and of foreign and domestic news which were reported and issued from various London coffee houses and chocolate houses. Very soon, The Tatler digressed from its intentions and began investigating manners of the society, establishing its principles of ideal behaviour in terms of a perfect gentleman and gentlewoman, and its standards of good taste. Duelling, gambling, rakish behaviour, and coquettishness were criticized, and virtuous action was admired. The periodicals had an explicit Whig⁷ allegiance and were several times drawn into political controversy.*

After Steele and Addison, Benjamin Franklin incorporates this style in the *New England Courant* (1721), published by the Franklin brothers. Unlike other newspapers and journals, they published essays that were attributed to various men of eminence in the colony and were independent in their own tone and offered a more critical account of the government and contemporary public figures. William Hazlitt is another proponent of early iterations of this style of journalism. He was a part of various publications, including *The Champion*, *The Examiner*, and *The Edinburgh Review*. Hazlitt introduced the ‘familiar’ essay, a style that adopted a subjective perspective and a conversational tone to discuss human experiences. His writing style was simple, colloquial, insightful without any literary pretension, brief, abrupt, vigorous, forceful, direct, ‘fake news,’ probably with frequent uses of figures of speech to emphasize his point of view.

One of the most evident roots of literary journalism can be traced back to the late 19th century during the American post-civil war period. Journalists like Lincoln Steffens, the first police reporter from *The Muckraker* newspaper, chal-

⁷ A political faction and then a political party in the Parliaments of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom. Between the 1680s and the 1850s, the Whigs contested power with their rivals, the Tories. The Whigs merged into the Liberal Party with the Peelites and Radicals in the 1850s. Many Whigs left the Liberal Party in 1886 to form the Liberal Unionist Party, which merged into the Conservative Party in 1912.

lenged the traditional understanding of journalism – that reporters were only supposed to write the ‘objective truth.’ Steffens believed that there was a story in each case and that once a reporter finds what has happened, he can write a novel for himself and a short story for the newspaper. He did something which was never done before and was influential in modern news outlets’ incorporation of a literary journalistic style to report events innovatively and appealingly. Many writers seriously took Steffens’s advice seriously, including Joseph Pulitzer, who popularized this style further. Pulitzer exposed political corruption and crusading investigative reporting with publicity stunts, blatant self-advertising, and sensational journalism. He made newspapers a source of entertainment and information by including comics, women’s fashion coverage, and sports column. He made such a massive contribution to journalism that the Pulitzer prizes were established after his death and bear his name.

Clay S. Felker, who is known as the father of the new journalism movement, made a massive contribution to literary journalism. He was a pioneering editor who founded *New York Magazine* and helped launch the new journalism of the 1960s. During the earlier stages, the magazine was published exclusively on Sundays and soon became “the hippest Sunday reading in town,” as Newsweek put it. He was known for introducing a large number of journalists into the profession, including the well-known Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, and Gay Talese. *The New York Times* addressed this tremendous change, observing that “few journalists have left a more enduring imprint on late 20th-century journalism – an imprint that was unabashedly mimicked even as it was being mocked – than Clay Felker” (*The New York Times*, 1955). Felker’s idea on journalism has helped create the notion of the writer as a star. He gave his writers the liberty to roam around the city to collect news and write them from a subjective point of view. The magazines had in-depth articles on politics, crime, and finance with a little information on shopping, restaurants, reviews, and listings that made *New York Magazine*, in the founder’s words, “a guide on how to live in this city”.⁸

When this new style of reporting had permeated mainstream news reportage in the 1950s, it was time again for a change once again. One of the first nonfiction investigative novels was written and published in Spain by Rodolfo Walsh, titled *Operación Masacre* (1957)⁹.

Towards an emotional bond. The investigative novel trend grabbed public interest, which resulted in a few more publications of similar genre, such as Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* in 1966, a book that is credited as the first significant nonfiction novel in English, and Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* in 1968, which is an example of the new journalism literary style. Capote exercises

⁸ Schudel, M. (n.d.). *Clay Felker*. Oral Cancer Foundation. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://oralcancerfoundation.org/people/arts-entertainment/clay-felker/>

⁹ Walsh assumed a false identity to collect evidence regarding the murder that the text is all about. *Operación Masacre* was regarded as a police novel for the poor. Walsh provides portraits of the victims, reconstructs the events, and shares testimonies of officials, and victims whom he has investigated as a journalist and also as a writer. *Operación Masacre* by Rodolfo Walsh. (n.d.). *Goodreads*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from https://www.goodreads.com/es/book/show/1207644.Operaci_n_Masacre

the manner of new journalism in his account of the Kansas murders, using first-person descriptions to connect the murdered family and their killers. When in the first-person narrative¹⁰, the readers can know the true feeling of everyone within the text where they create an emotional bond with the writing. Capote declared that his technique was closer to reality than the more traditional crime reporting form. This style, takes the dispassionate journalistic witness out of the story and replaces him with a reporter immersed in the story. Capote humanised his subjects, including the leading crime investigator, the family, and, most controversially, the killers. Though Capote is credited with popularizing this new form of journalism, the origins of style is indebted to the works of Daniel Defoe, from the eighteenth century, and several American writers from the nineteenth century¹¹.

A manifesto for this new type of journalism was published by Tom Wolfe and E.W. Johnson in 1973, *The New Journalism*. This anthology had a collection of examples of new journalism, and these examples were those that were not found in the newspaper but were typical examples, that could be found only in a literary piece. They were not the traditional journalism by traditional journalists, but those were written by literary journalists, overlaying a variety of issues from the frivolous to the deadly serious. Wolfe remarks that: “New journalism was the term that caught on eventually... At the time... one was aware only that all of a sudden, there was some sort of artistic excitement in journalism, and that was a new thing in itself” (Wolfe, Johnson, 1996). Wolfe alludes to the new genre as journalism that reads “like a novel” because it makes use of the four techniques used by novelists, that is, setting the story in specific scenes instead of in dislocated “historical” trends, extensive use of realistic dialogue, point-of-view narration from the perspective of characters, and an eye for every day “status” details that reveal the characters’ social reality.

The nonfiction investigative writers stood out as literary journalists and attracted a broad audience because of their unique experimental writing style. They emphasised the literary devices and techniques in their investigative literary pieces. Literary or narrative journalism is not merely telling stories to the readers; it is a complex genre with multiple layers of contexts, truth, twists and turns. When handled well by the writers, facts become essential and compelling elements for the readers. It all depends on the journalist and their writing ability. A literary journalistic piece, just like traditional journalistic pieces, focuses on accuracy and truth, and covers authentic and well-researched events. However, it does so by literary journalism by appealing to human emotions, making sure that it conveys a personal story behind a public one. A narrative journalist ensures that piece has a detailed plot¹² that comprises a rising action, falling action, exposition, con-

¹⁰ Reilly, S. (2021, March 2). The advantages and disadvantages of first-person perspective: Essays. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://sebreilly.com/essays/the-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-first-person-perspective/>

¹¹ Such as John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, and Ernest Hemingway during World War II.

¹² *Aristotelian concept of plot*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.bachelorandmaster.com/criticaltheories/aristotelian-concept-of-plot.html#.YlkTfYtBxaQ>; The traditional plot structure. (n.d.). *Super Summary*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.supersummary.com/plot/>; Plot: Importance, elements, and construction: Aristotle. (2020,

flict, climax and resolution. One of the most critical aspects of a literary journal is the point of view¹³; the point of view or perspective is a crucial factor in deciding whether to convey the truth subjectively or objectively.

Extant research on narrative journalism has mostly been related to its generic features and its migration from the newsroom to online forums through videos, slideshows, illustrations, and the changed process of newsgathering for these online narratives. Extant scholarship has attempted to arrive at a definition for the term ‘narrative journalism’ and its specific generic attributes. Research on narrative journalism examines the gaps between the narrative journalism from the knowledge that regular reading audiences possess. The narrative journalism in the minds of the common audience cannot be the true definition of narrative journalism, there are differences between the already known meaning and the real meaning. The reading audiences are more closely in touch with the narrative journalism and its form and style. There is also an investigation about the scientific literature, especially between 1998 and 2017, which resulted in the publication of almost more than a hundred journal articles on narrative journalism. Critical discourse on journalism today also anticipates the future of narrative journalism. The difference between fake news and narrative journalism is also a widely discussed topic by scholars, along with a redefinition of the terms, where fake news has taken liberties with the truth and has been taking liberties with the truth, and the narratives take liberties with the style and format than the truth present. “We live in a culture of blur and hybrids,” says Mark Lawson (Keeble, 2018). There is a blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction when it comes to literary or narrative journalism.

When truth is stranger than fiction. On the floor, Ryan saw scattered bloodstains, which grew more concentrated as he advanced to a back corner, near a five-foot chalkboard inscribed with coloured chalk: “May each of us equally enjoy happiness and the root of happiness.” He noticed even more blood at the base of a purple door, as if it had seeped from the other side. He gently pushed the purple door. It stopped, hitting the side of a body (Morse, 2013).

Though it reads like a work of fiction, the above excerpt is from a nonfiction investigative novel by Dan Morse, *The Yoga Store Murder: The Shocking True Account of the Lululemon Athletica Killing*¹⁴. This novel is often considered a fine piece of a literary journalism, a work of true crime. *The Yoga Store Murder*, published in 2013, details a murder that happened on 12 March 2011 inside a Lululemon

March 7). *School of Literature*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.msmsol.com/2020/03/plot-importance-elements-and.html>

¹³ Cadman, B. (2018, April 30). The importance of the point of view. *Writer's Life*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://writerslife.org/importance-point-view/>

¹⁴ Augenstein, N. (2013, June 19). New book: Lululemon murderer was likely a prostitute. *WTOP News*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://wtop.com/news/2013/06/new-book-lululemon-murderer-was-likely-a-prostitute/>; Stashower, D. (2013, November 29.). The Yoga Store Murder: The shocking true account of the Lululemon Athletica killing by Dan Morse. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-yoga-store-murder-the-shocking-true-account-of-the-lululemon-athletica-killing-by-dan-morse/2013/11/29/36493e46-51fc-11e3-a7f0-b790929232e1_story.html

Athletica retail store in Bethesda, Maryland, in one of the nation's wealthiest suburbs. The incident shook the whole country with the murder of a thirty-year-old woman who was stabbed over 331 times with six different weapons, the rape of a twenty-eight-year-old co-worker, and the six-day trial that followed¹⁵. The writer spoke to more than 150 people to collect the data to produce this work of investigative crime.

The Yoga Store Murder details the murder of Jayna Murray by her co-worker Brittany Norwood as Jayna saw Brittany steal a pair of leggings from the store. There were 331 wounds on Jayna's body, out of which 105 were defensive wounds, and Jayna was alive for most of them. She had six blunt wounds to her head and another blunt wound that crushed her skull. The injuries to her skull caused bruises to the inner part due to a tremendous force. A fracture broke Jayna's skull, and her spine was severed by a knife wound that went through her neck to her brain, and eventually caused her death. She had wounds in various parts of her body, such as on her shoulder, to the lower back, and two to the back of the head; she was also strangled, her head was cracked with a one-foot metal bar that was part of the cargo rack. The prosecution believes Jayna was assaulted for twenty minutes, and most of her injuries were inflicted when alive. Dan Morse records such a brutal murder in the text and recreates the incidents before the murder, after the murder, the investigation from various ends, characters, and scenes, and also the trial period.

Sectional fusion and the eye of a narrative. *The Yoga Store Murder* has the structure of a novel with four sections and several chapters under each section. The chapters act as a bridge between each incident that has took place in different places at different time. The transition between the sections and chapters would help the readers to understand and digest the information in the transition process, and it gives space and pause for the readers to absorb it as a whole.

The four sections in *The Yoga Store Murder* serve different purposes: the first section, *Bethesda* reveals the discovery of the crime; the second section, *Brittany and Jayna*, gives an overview of the lives of the two girls, the two leads of this true-crime narrative; the third section, *Zeroing In*, is about unveiling the crime and joining the dots; and the last section, *Why?* concludes the narrative satisfactorily, the incident and its aftermath. Morse has divided the sections in such a way that it coheres as a narrative and progresses with a certain momentum.

¹⁵ Lululemon Murder. (2022, March 7). *Forensic Tales*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://forensictales.com/lululemon-murder/>; *Woman says she was Brittany Norwood's cellmate*. (n.d.) *Bethesda News*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <http://bethesda.wusa9.com/news/news/woman-says-she-was-brittany-norwoods-cellmate/55264>; Blanco, J.I. (n.d.). Brittany Norwood. *Murderpedia, the Encyclopedia of Murderers*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://murderpedia.org/female.N/n/norwood-brittany.htm>; Heim, B. (2021, June 8). Lululemon: The horrifying murders over a pair of leggings. *Film Daily*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://filmdaily.co/obsessions/true-crime/lululemon-murder/>; Brittany Norwood: The woman behind the Jayna Murray Murder. (2021, October 14). *Your Daily Hunt*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.yourdailyhunt.com/brittany-norwood-the-woman-behind-the-jayna-murray-murder/>

The Yoga Store Murder has very closely followed the structure of a novel which gives a perfect impression of a literary work. The build-up over four sections highlights the absolute horror of the crime. “The term ‘novel’ is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of fiction written in prose” (Abrams, 1999). One of the characteristic features of a novelistic narratives is narrative perspective. The narration of any text depends on the voice that relays the narrative. This narrative voice mediates between the reader and the text, and is referred to alternately as the point of view or the eye of a narrative. “Point of view signifies the way a story gets told – the mode (or modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events that constitute the narrative in a work of fiction” (Abrams, Harpham, 1999). There are numerous ways to present a viewpoint in a narrative; but this perspective is particularly relevant in relaying a true event. In the text, for instance, Morse is expected to relay the events as they happened from an objective point of view, uninfluenced by personal biases and opinions. It is thus essential to ask the question ‘who is telling the story?’ Here we see that the narrative is relayed from multiple perspectives. The writer did not only focus on Jayna Murray, the one who was murdered, or Brittany Norwood, the one who was raped, or Jim Drewry or Dimitry Ruvin, the detectives; but also, on the point of views of the employee of the adjacent store and a customer who was in an Apple store next to the yoga store. Like Capote in *In Cold Blood*, Morse relays not merely the events but also describes the thoughts of the “characters” involved:

Now, though, she looked to her right and listened. The sounds were high-pitched yelps and squeals, and low-pitched grunts, thuds, a dragging noise, as if something heavy was being moved. Jana thought they might be coming from a room near the back exit or a room upstairs, where technicians were still on duty (Morse, 2013).

The above excerpt is from one of the minor characters’ perspectives, Jana Svrzo, the employee in the adjacent building of the yoga store; she does not appear as frequently as the others and is of marginal significance to the unfolding of the narrative, and yet, the writer begins the narrative from her point of view, inching closer to the scene of the crime as the narrative unfolds by progressively relaying the perspective of characters who were in close proximity to the incident:

The two walked in. Ahead of them was a long narrow space with wooden floors and high ceilings. Ryan had never been inside a Lululemon shop. He thought it looked kind of like a Gap, with lots of low racks and tables full of bright-colored clothes. He walked to the back as Rachel waited up front. “Anybody here?” Ryan called out. “Anybody here?” No response (Morse, 2013).

The passage mentioned above is from a passer-by’s point of view, twenty-six-year-old Ryan Haugh, who came to a nearby Apple store to buy an iPad 2. Haugh also appears only once in the text, unaware that he is at the scene of a crime. This technique employed by Morse – progressing from peripheral perspectives to central ones in a bid to build suspense – aids in piquing readerly interest in a nar-

rative that is already familiar to the readers via conventional news coverage of the incident. How does one sustain readerly interest in an incident that has played out in the public imagination? Morse finds the answer to the question through the deft deployment of perspectival shift to multiple subjective experiences of the fateful evening at the Lululemon Athletica:

Now, as Ruvin stood behind the cash registers, he spotted a supply of bright red reusable shopping bags displayed so customers could see them. The bags showed the silhouette of a woman in a yoga pose and were covered with all kinds of sayings (Morse, 2013).

Brittany was wheeled into room 12, a private area in the emergency when a detective named Deana Mackie walked in, she saw Brittany on her back, her face still caked in blood – the way it would stay until it could be swabbed for clues (Morse, 2013).

A patrolman found Jayna’s car, a silver Pontiac, parked about three blocks from the yoga store in a lot behind the farmers that seemed a little strange. If Jayna had driven back around 10:00 P.M., wouldn’t she have been able to get a closer spot? (Morse, 2013).

The three excerpts mentioned above are from the perspective of three detectives who were working on the case since the reporting of the crime. He intersperses these subjective observations with the objective, third-person perspective that is usually adopted in journalistic writing:

To the Norwoods, judge Robert Greenberg had forcefully declared that Brittany was in full command of her faculties, and had not been in some kind of psychotic daze after spending all night in the middle of a bloody crime scene that made her incapable of being herself. Nor had any evidence been presented supporting Brittany’s claims about masked attackers. In fact, her own attorneys had argued that the story was such nonsense that detectives should have seen through it immediately (Morse, 2013).

Alternating first-person witness reports with the presentation of verifiable third-person accounts of observations by legal and judicial figures in the narrative, Morse strikes a fine balance between eliciting interest and building confidence in his readers. The narrative progresses without revealing the true murderer. Morse has cleverly written his piece of work where he has revealed the killer only in the climax.

With these multiple points of view, the writer ensures transparency while also depicting the people involved in the actual incident as relatable characters. The narrative perspective also covers those who were not directly involved but were thought to be involved in the crime. The different perspectives give the liberty to the readers to play the detective in piecing the narrative together. Moreover, the different perspectives present a rounded account of the incident and its aftermath. The readers begin reading unsuspectingly, but the narrative gradually forces them to start questioning everything. Additionally, descriptions and details play a vital role in this text. Description in narrative writing aids in getting the readers involved. Crafting the details of the story is a technique that many writers try and work hard to excel in. As Chekhov remarks, it is better not tell him that the moon

is shining, but to show him the glint of light on broken glass (Donnelly, Chekhov, 2013). Details of a piece will help the readers experience the text rather than merely reading it. Details bring every aspect of a narrative to life: the characters, the setting, the plot, etc. A writer will be able to show things to the readers when he involves every single detail, including the smell, taste, touch, sound, sight, the warmth in the atmosphere, and the list goes on. Morse has wisely used all these elements in his writing, to re-enact the murder for the readers instead of merely informing and reporting. He also includes notes from the crime scene investigation, the autopsy report, the testimony of witnesses who heard Jayna's screams, etc.

The Yoga Store Murder also shows unity of action: a beginning, a middle, and an end. “A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end” (Butcher, 2008, p. 10). *The Yoga Store Murder* gives a sense of completeness. The text has all the five stages of a plot suggested by Gustav Freytag- exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion, that is, the opening hook, character sketches, plot highlights, core conflicts, and the end.

Truth over news. Several news channels and newspapers reported the incident of this yoga store murder, but those form of media was different from the one that Dan Morse wrote. How is it different? The news channels and papers merely reported the incident, clearly identifying Brittany Norwood as the murderer. In his narrative, Morse did not openly accuse anyone; he merely presents evidence and first-person testimonies to the readers. Just the titles conventional news articles on the issue illustrate this: for instance, Graham Smith’s article titled “331 wounds inflicted with six different weapons: Yoga store worker found guilty of bludgeoning colleague to death,” published in 2011. The section below is taken from an article by Stewart J. Lawrence, published on 9 November 2011 (*HuffPost*), under the title “Murder At Lululemon: Yoga's ‘Heart Of Darkness’?”:

Last week's guilty verdict in the trial of 28-year-old Brittany Norwood – accused of first-degree murder in the grisly slaying of her 30-year old co-worker Jayna Murray – has brought to a close – for now, at least – the latest ugly chapter in the history of Lululemon, the posh yoga apparel company whose suburban outlet on the outskirts of Washington, DC was the setting for a killing that seasoned homicide detectives have described as one of the worst they've ever seen. It would be tempting to dismiss the savage murder – Norwood stabbed and bludgeoned Murray an estimated 330 times over the course of 20 minutes, severing her spinal cord – as a bizarre and random event. That's surely what the Canadian-based Lululemon, which seems to have nine lives when it comes to recurring scandal and controversy, is hoping for. But for the American yoga community, which extols the virtues of peace and non-violence, the killing raises deeply disturbing issues. How could two female ‘yogis’ – the Sanskrit word for devotees of the ancient Hindu practice – arrive at a place where lethal force became an ‘option’? And what kind of workplace environment would fuel, or at least fail to ameliorate, such a dispute?¹⁶

¹⁶ Lawrence, S.J. (2011, November 9). Murder at Lululemon: Yoga's ‘Heart of Darkness’? *HuffPost*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/when-yogis-kill-the-grisl_b_1077457

We can juxtapose the style of this article with Morse's narrative and observe that stark difference in its direct style and objective tone. Morse, instead of reporting the incidents blankly, ensures that the readers are emotionally invested in the narrative. With his subjective writing, the readers are encouraged to imaginatively reconstruct the scene of the crime. Morse's text paves the way for them to actively engage and connect with the narrative instead of merely reporting event and giving information objectively. Journalism is at its best when facts are relayed in an engaging manner. Morse text achieves this difficult balance deftly, as affirmed by Harold Schechter in his review:

A true-crime tour de force, with all of the features that make a whodunit great: a suspenseful, intricately constructed plot; a taut prose style that wastes no words; memorable characters brought to vivid life in a few deft strokes; and of course, a dogged murder investigation that leads to a stunning revelation (Morse, 2013).

Conclusion

In the new journalism, the eye of the beholder is all – or almost all, says Robert Stein. Literary journalism is a combination of narrative literature and factual reporting. There has been a lot of criticism against this form mainly because its literariness is misconstrued as compromising the objectivity of the piece.

The major problem with literary journalism that the critics consider is the threat to objectivity posed by questions of reliability and authenticity, and the narrative liberties taken by the writer. What if the writer of literary journalism takes too much liberty with the fictionalization of facts? The boundaries tend to be crossed when the writer tries to give too much literary essence to a nonfiction text. When nonfiction takes too much liberty than it should take and unbelievably exaggerates information, the nonfiction text no more looks like a nonfiction text but makes readers assume it is fiction. If the writer does not want to make it too literary and maintain the nonfiction qualities, then the writer may end up in mere reporting, which is no different from journalism's purpose. The writers should be conscious of not making it a report and not making a fictional narrative. The boundaries between fiction and nonfiction are fragile. Only experienced writers can maintain the boundaries.

There are audiences who prefer literary journalism, especially readers. Literary journalism is preferred for its trust and information. There is an assumption among this generation that truth is almost not considered and not given importance, and most people find pleasure in unreal things; fiction would be a perfect example of unreal, magical scenes. Literary journalism presents the real happenings in a presentable way. The real happenings are not simple happenings but the ones that are difficult to believe happened. Reality is presented with a taste of fiction and wonder. Literary journalism usually delivers information that happened in an unrealistic way or in a way that no one would believe. The theme that literary journalism focuses on is an investigative crime, and true crimes are underrated. People do not know to what extent a crime could be cruel and violent; when the violence and brutality are presented in a written form through written text,

it becomes a different experience for the readers. The readers involve themselves with the text the most. More than reading and getting informed, they get themselves killed, injured, and hurt in the process of reading.

There have been predictions that newspapers are nearing their end even though the print newspapers are very much active around us. The threat to the newspaper made people come up with literary journalism. A particular group of people accept the upgraded form; in Claire Armitstead's¹⁷ words, “people who have visions or visionary people look at the brighter and upgraded version rather than sticking to the previous ones.” In the postmodern world, what is not possible. Everything is an art as long as it pleases the audience and gives pleasure.

Questions should be posed differently. Instead of asking where the boundaries are getting blurred, the focus should be on what this mutation of the form of factual reporting says about the limitations of objective reportage and the possibilities presented by an amalgamation of styles borrowed from news reporting and narrative writing. In the near future, scholars should see literary journalism as a part of journalism as well as a part of literature. There can be a taste of literature and vice versa. “Newspapers that stress their storytelling function”, Broersma argues, “tend to use an emotionally involving style, often characterised as sensationalism, that aims to appeal to the emotions of their readers” (Broersma, 2017, p. xvi).

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¹⁷ Associate Editor, Culture, at *The Guardian*.

Bio notes:

T.K. Kavya, research scholar, Department of English and Foreign Languages, College of Engineering & Technology, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chengalpattu, 603203, Republic of India. E-mail: kavyathg@gmail.com

B. Monika Nair, Doctor, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Foreign Languages, College of Engineering & Technology, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chengalpattu, 603203, Republic of India. E-mail: monikanb@srmist.edu.in

Сведения об авторах:

Кавья Т.К., научный сотрудник, кафедры английского и иностранных языков, инженерно-технологический колледж, Институт науки и технологий SRM, Республика Индия, 603203, Ченгалпатту, Каттанкулатур. E-mail: kavyathg@gmail.com

Наир Моника Б., доцент кафедры английского и иностранных языков, инженерно-технологический колледж, Институт науки и технологий SRM, Республика Индия, 603203, Ченгалпатту, Каттанкулатур. E-mail: monikanb@srmist.edu.in