



# The center and beyond: the expansion of American literary journalism studies

*O centro e além: a expansão dos estudos de jornalismo literário americano*

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## ABSTRACT

The increasing scholarly interaction and exchanges in international literary journalism studies have deepened our understanding of international connections and mediations while adding to our knowledge of the specificity of American literary journalism studies. My purpose here is to interrogate and expand some of the current conceptions, definitions, epistemologies, and critical directions of American literary journalism studies. In doing so, I will also examine several of the challenges such an expansion entails and what I see as some of the goals to work towards. My discussion will close by focusing on the intended impact of such changes for international literary journalism studies.

**Keywords:** American Literary Journalism. International Connections. Journalism Studies.

## RESUMO

A crescente interação acadêmica e intercâmbio em estudos internacionais de jornalismo literário aprofundaram nosso entendimento das conexões e mediações internacionais, acrescentando ao nosso conhecimento da especificidade dos estudos de jornalismo literário americano. Meu propósito aqui é interrogar e expandir atuais concepções, definições, epistemologias e direções críticas de estudos de jornalismo literário americano. Ao fazê-lo, também irei examinar vários dos desafios que tal expansão implica e que vejo como alguns dos objetivos a serem alcançados. Minha discussão fechar-se-á focando no impacto pretendido de tais mudanças para estudos internacionais de jornalismo literário.

**Palavras-chave:** Jornalismo Literário Americano. Conexões Internacionais. Estudos de Jornalismo.

## Accomplishments

American literary journalism studies is an emerging field but its progress during the past several years has been impressive. Alongside such groundbreaking and important studies as Thomas Connery's *Journalism and Realism* (2010); John Hartsock's *Literary Journalism and the Aesthetics of Experience* (2016); Jan Whitt's *Setting the Borderland: Other Voices in Literary Journalism* (2008); Mark Canada's *Literature and Journalism: Inspirations, Intersections, and Inventions from Ben Franklin to Stephen Crane* (2013); Jean Marie Lutes's *Front-Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930* (2006); Doug Underwood's *Journalism and the Novel: Truth and Fiction, 1700-2000* (2008); Kathy Forde's *Literary Journalism on Trial* (2008); Karen Roggenkamp's *Narrating*

*the News* (2005); and international critical volumes such as Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler's (Eds.) *The Journalistic Imagination* (2007); Sue Joseph and Richard Keeble's (Eds.) *Profile Pieces* (2016) and John Bak and Bill Reynolds's (Eds.) *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transatlantic Influences* (2011), the *International Association of Literary Journalism Studies* (founded in 2006) and its journal *Literary Journalism Studies* (created in 2009) continue to define, challenge, and expand literary journalism scholarship. In practice and stature, the discipline is beginning to position itself as a collective enterprise and institution.

Furthermore, in the past twenty years, there have been excellent studies done on American literary journalism history. We are all immensely indebted to Norman Sims, John Hartsock, Tom Connery, Shelly Fisher Fishkin, Phyllis Frus, Jan Whitt, Karen Roggenkamp, Doug Underwood, Ben Yagoda, John Pauley, Mark Kramer, and others<sup>1</sup>. And there have been useful social histories on American newspapers that include, for example, discussion of literary realism and new journalism, such as Michael Shudson's *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (1978) or Cecelia Tichi's cultural history on muckracking in America, *Exposés and Excess* (2004), or Jeff Allred's study of 1930s documentary forms, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (2009). Attending to print culture, women literary journalists, public literary journalistic culture, in addition to single-author studies, these histories have challenged the received wisdom about literary journalism's cultural and historical importance. In fact, many of the aesthetic positions taken up by these studies offer a range of ideas about how the *pairing* or *fusion* of literature and journalism can be formative or transformative, and how literary-journalistic ideas have real-world effects.

It would seem that the phenomenon of literary journalism no longer needs a drumroll. As Josh Roiland (2015, p. 63) has recently pointed out, "Literary journalism is experiencing an extended renaissance both as a creative practice—reaching perhaps an apotheosis with Belarussian journalist Svetlana Alexievitch winning the 2015 Nobel prize in literature – and as an object of study." In Roiland's

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1 See Norman Sims (Ed.), *The Literary Journalists* (1984) and *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century* (2008); John Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form*. (2000); Thomas B. Connery (Ed.), *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre* (1992); Shelly Fisher Fishkin, *From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America* (1985); Phyllis Frus, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narrative* (1994); Jan Whitt, *Setting the Borderland: Other Voices in Literary Journalism* (2008); Karen Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News* (2005); Doug Underwood, *The Undervalued War between Journalism and Fiction* (2013); Ben Yagoda, and Kevin Kerrane (Eds.), *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism* (1997); John Pauley, *The New Journalism: the Triumph of the Long-form Narrative*, forthcoming Northwestern UP; and Mark Kramer and Wendy Call (Eds.), *Telling True Stories* (2007).

view, literary journalism (his preferred taxonomy to “long form journalism”), “enjoys a renaissance in print, is amplified by curators online, and breaks new ground in the digital world” (2015, p. 64). Similarly, Norman Sims, in a “cultural approach to literary journalism studies” has incisively sketched out his vision of the “promises” of literary journalism by characterizing the genre as a cultural and narrative force to be reckoned with: “Literary journalism speaks to the nature of our phenomenal reality *in spite* of the fact that our interpretations are ultimately subjective and personal” (2009, p. 14-15).

Building on the foundational work of Norman Sims, Sally Fisher Fishkin, Phyllis Frus, John Hartsock, David Abrahamson, David Eason, and others, American literary journalism studies is turning its attention to many more kinds of texts: Isabelle Wilkerson *The Warmth of Other Sons* (Kathy Forde), Sylvester Monroe’s *Brothers Black and Poor – a True Story of Survival* (Isabelle Meuret), Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Roberta Maguire), Meridel Le Sueur’s “Women on the Breadlines” and “I Was Marching” (Nancy Roberts); working out new terms of analysis and methodologies that advance older models: literary journalism and civic life (John J. Pauley), literary journalism in the digital era (Amy Wilentz); offering new touchstones for political analysis and action: Charles Bowden’s anarcho-biotic poetics (Marthy Nandorfy), civic memory and urban community narratives (Stacy Spaulding); and revisiting traditional aspects of literary journalistic values but pursuing them differently: journalogues (Robert Boynton), literary journalism and ecocriticism (Robert Alexander), Richard Wright’s literary journalism and literary modernism (William Dow), and nineteenth-century epistolary journalism (Katrina J. Quinn). A new cultural history is surfacing orchestrated by several currents of scholarship: aesthetics, print culture studies, the disciplinary history of literary journalism studies, and the history of a public literary-journalistic culture. Indeed, the profession continues to advance with more single-author studies, anthologies on literary-journalistic American writings, and critical volumes<sup>2</sup>.

### Difficulties and Challenges

But despite such advances, challenges for American literary journalism studies persist. For example, literary journalism is not but should be a *necessary*

<sup>2</sup> See respectively Thomas Kunkel, *Man in Profile: Joseph Mitchell of the New Yorker* (2015); *Radiant Truths : Essential Dispatches, Reports, Confessions, and Other Essayson American Belief*, Jeff Sharlet (Ed.), (2014); and the forthcoming *Routledge Companion to American Literary Journalism* Roberta Maguire and William Dow (Eds.).

category for literary and journalistic historiography<sup>3</sup>. And here there are disturbing institutional oversights. Take the case of some of the representative American literary histories as exclusionary examples: *The Columbia History of the American Novel* (1991); *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: The American Novel: 1870-1940* (2014); *A Companion to the Modern American Novel, 1900-1950* (2009); *A Companion to American Fiction, 1865-1914* (2009); *The Cambridge Companion to American Novelists* (2013); and *A New Literary History of America* (2009). Although many of us consider literary journalism as a historical *literary genre*, much like modernism or realism, none of these histories have any chapters on literary journalism, in whole or in part, and its relation to US literature. None list the term “literary journalism” or such related incarnations as “creative non-fiction”, “reportage,” and “investigative fiction” in their indexes or tables of contents. Nor do any of these histories, with the exception of one chapter in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel* (2011), David Schmid’s, “The Nonfiction Novel”, and a subject-related chapter, Betsy Klimasmith’s “Journalism and the Urban Novel” (from *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*), contain any discussions about American literary journalism, as if both its knowledge and form were immaterial and its historical formations non-existent<sup>4</sup>.

In a similar vein, histories of American journalism also tend to efface the term *literary journalism*, and exclude the genre as essential to journalism history (Nerone, 2011, p. 7-27). In a random sampling of book-length studies on the subject, my results were mostly negative. Predating the 1960’s “New Journalism,” an older work such as Frank Luther Mott’s *American Journalism: 1690-1960* (1962) perhaps understandably does not contain substantive content on literary journalism nor is this term listed as part of any chapter title or in its index. But neither do more recent studies, including *The Press in America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Michael Emery, Edzin Emery, Nancy L. Roberts. (eds.), 2000); Hilary H. Ward’s *Mainstreams of American Media History* (1997); and

3 What I’m ultimately considering here is the possibility of a certain history of narrative, in an expansive and inclusive sense, as opposed to a literary history or a journalism history or a literary-journalism history. This could be something in the spirit of the Oxford History of the Novel in English (2014), as expressed in the Oxford website’s burb for the volume: “The Oxford History of the Novel in English is a comprehensive, worldwide history of English-language prose fiction in all its varieties. The series spans more than six centuries and draws on the knowledge of a large international team of scholars. It offers a new understanding of the novel’s distinctiveness, its continuity, and its global significance in the modern world”. Available in: <<https://global.oup.com/academic/content/series/o/oxford-history-of-the-novel-in-english-ohne/?cc=fr&lang=en>>. Literary-journalistic texts, of course, in and as part of a general history of narrative, would find their own distinctive home.

4 Elisa Tamarkin’s “Literature in the News” (2012) is one of the rare studies on American literature by a literary historian that demonstrates a firm grasp of journalism scholarship.

Ken Auletta's *Inside the Business of News* (2003). Even more specialized studies often concerning alternative narrative forms, such as Jean Marie Lutes's *Front Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930* (2006); Everette E. Dennis and William L. Rivers's *Other Voices: The New Journalism in America* (2011); Lauren Kessler's *The Dissident Press: Alternative Journalism in American History* (1984); Bob Ostertag's *People's Movements, People's Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (2006); and Todd Vogel's *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, (Vogel (Ed.), 2001) eschew the term literary journalism and its old and new avatars. The literary-journalistic genre and the knowledge it procures is an essential part both of an American literary history and a journalism history and therefore its general exclusion from both these histories is more than troubling.

Other issues and difficulties abound. Although this is gradually changing, most literary and cultural critics today have only a sketchy knowledge of journalism history and even less of literary journalism studies or of the forms and practices of literary journalism. Conversely, journalists and journalism historians are largely unfamiliar with most forms of literary theory and literary criticism in general and their relevance to the works of literary journalism. In effect, as the atomized histories of American literature, American journalism, and American literary journalism illustrate (reflecting academic disciplinary boundaries), the interdisciplinary nature of literary journalism means that scholars of journalism and scholars of literature have a tendency to be equally uncertain about what to do with the genre as an academic topic.

The inroads of American literary journalism studies in US academic culture have been modest. It could be simply a matter of what we see in our respective disciplines, but in mine – American studies and American literature – literary journalism still remains a largely unknown or under-acknowledged entity, particularly within the larger history of academic literary culture<sup>5</sup>. Despite

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5 I would therefore disagree with Josh Roiland's assertion that "In every measurable way, literary journalism has established itself in the academic world" ("By Any Other Name"), 68. I'm thinking specifically here of the critical neglect surrounding American novelists and poets who first established their reputations as writers of fiction but also wrote literary journalism: e.g., James Agee, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright. But not only. For example, most critics of American literature are paying very little attention to contemporary nonfiction writers or to a group that Robert S. Boynton refers to in his study, *The New New Journalism* (2005), as "the New New Journalists" (Jane Kramer, Jon Krakauer, Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, et al). The claim that Boynton makes in the book's introduction – "the New New Journalism has assumed a premier place in American Literature" (2005) – would be astounding news to these critics, as well as to most cultural historians and American Studies scholars. This does not detract from the point that scholars of American literature should be reading and writing about this extraordinary group of nonfiction writers and literary journalists.



the influence of literary and cultural theory, cultural studies, American studies, historicist studies, and the fact that academic literary studies has re-appropriated and developed the possibilities that were excluded or marginalized during its early disciplinary life – e.g., Marxism, feminism, queer studies, diasporic studies – the virtual exclusion of American literary journalism studies continues<sup>6</sup>. Just as, say, American popular culture has been reworked to become a genre and division within academic literary studies, American literary journalism studies must also claim its disciplinary status. Once fully established as a discipline, it will not only bring scholars together into a shared domain of inquiry, understandings, protocols, and vocabularies, but will eventually acquire a new body of methods and theories.

American literary journalism studies has not been keeping a close enough eye on how the term literary journalism is currently defined and used in US magazines, newspapers, and other venues of public literary culture. For example, on this matter, my ad hoc study of the *New York Times Review of Books*, covering the period 2003-2016, reveals that the term appears only 9 times and is never defined or discussed by the reviewer, as if its meaning is self-evident and needs no further elaboration. As my study shows, the *New York Times Review of Books* categorized these works as literary journalism and/or their authors as literary journalists: Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco, *Days of Destruction and Revolt* (2012), (on American Poverty); Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*, (2008), (success stories); Thomas Mallon, *Two Moons*, (2001) (Historical novel); Walter Kirn, *Mission to America*, (2005), (bounty of new world; organized religion); and Robert Boynton, *The New New Journalism*, (2005), (a new non-fictional form). My corresponding studies (admittedly, expedient and limited) of *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Esquire*, and *Harper's*, for this same period, produced similar results<sup>7</sup>.

Recent examples of what critics are calling literary journalism in popular, best-selling books are Charlie Le Duff's *Detroit: An American Autopsy* (2013); and Amanda Ripley's *The Smartest Kids in the World* (2013). The blurb for Ripley's book reads: "Amanda Ripley is a literary journalist whose stories on human behavior have appeared in *Time*, the *Atlantic*, *Slate* and helped *Time* win two

6 This is not to deny the increasing number of courses and Master's programs devoted to literary journalism in US universities. See for example the description of the Literary Journalism Major program at UC Irvine "created to meet the needs of a growing number of students who wish to read, study and write nonfiction prose that has transcended the limits of daily journalism." Available in: <<http://www.humanities.uci.edu/litjournal/>>.

7 Details of these studies will appear in the *Routledge Companion to American Literary Journalism*, Roberta Maguire and William Dow (Eds.).

National Magazine Awards<sup>8</sup>. That a book devoted to the differences between schools in the US and abroad is being described (and touted) as an example of literary journalism should be of great interest to literary journalism scholars, particularly those studying contemporary American culture. But this doesn't appear to be the case.

These facts beg important questions. What might the term's (relative) infrequency and its popular use mean in terms of the relation between a public literary culture and American literary journalism studies? Is the US publishing industry at odds with and/or indifferent to the US academy's legitimation of literary journalism and literary journalism studies? If literary journalism is as widely recognized and propagated as a form in US culture, as certain critics and writers assert, why isn't there an annual anthology devoted to the genre, e.g., *The Best American Literary Journalism, 2017*, as there is for American poetry, the short story, travel writing, and the essay (see Scribner's annual *Best of series*)? Why is the genre being excluded (as a separate, independent page) and resisted by Wikipedia, although its "Journalism Genres"<sup>9</sup> highlights such derivatives and sub-categories as Ambush journalism, Celebrity or people journalism, Churnalism, Convergence journalism, Investigative journalism, New journalism, Science journalism, and Sports journalism? Literary journalism does not even rank for consideration in its more lowly "Other genres" category (Roiland, 2015, p. 88). At least on certain levels, why is the term, narrative mode, and concept having difficulty gaining traction in a public literary culture; or inversely, why has the term seemingly been so non-reflectively (and perhaps too readily) accepted by this culture? Studies of the perceptions and ways of a public literary culture in reference to the form are essential to the growth of American literary journalism studies and should be conceived accordingly. Clearly, we need to keep closer track of how US literary journalism is shaping and was shaped by its material infrastructure (e.g., *The Atlantic*) its characteristic social practices and venues (e.g., as a racial and social polemic in Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me*, 2015), and its institutional supports (English, Mass Communications, and Journalism departments)<sup>10</sup>.

8 With the exception of Robert Boynton's *The New New Journalists* (2005), American literary journalism studies scholars are not writing on any of these titles or authors (in any way or form), which, in my view, is as an example of the disconnect between US academic and public literary cultures. To say the least, a more inclusive American-studies/cultural studies-like approach is needed here.

9 Available in: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism\\_genres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism_genres)>.

10 Further illustrating the disconnect between academic and public literary cultures, many contemporary American writers, categorized as literary journalists by scholars, are dismissive or suspicious of the term *literary journalism*, both as a narrative category and as pertinent to their writing. On this subject, see for example Josh Roiland's (2015, p. 68-69), interviews/exchanges with Ron

## Goals

First, as a general objective, I think we need to mistrust the notion that the entire panoply of literary analyses and tools apply equally well to both fiction and non-fiction, especially when the textual exemplifications for defending this position are drawn exclusively from novels and other fictional genres. To my mind, the formalistic and ontological natures of literature and journalism, when brought together, do things that we're just beginning to understand. For example, the "literary" in literary journalism is unlike the literary in literature because it is essentially transformed by the journalistic and essayistic discourse; so, too, is the "journalism" by the literary. I would suggest that interpreting a metaphor in a literary journalistic text is not necessarily the same as doing so in a piece of conventional journalism or fiction, and that such literary tools and descriptors as symbol, metonymy, image, and tone can take on quite different qualities and meanings in a literary journalistic work. This of course affects the reading of literary journalism in that one reads (or should read) this genre differently than one reads literature or straightforward journalistic pieces<sup>11</sup>. I think such precepts and methods can productively be applied to American literary journalism studies.

More precisely, they can serve as an important inroad to developing a discipline of literary journalism studies that not only informs a theory of the field but creates a platform in which the genre can be examined on its own terms, and not necessarily on those of mass communications, journalism, and literary studies. In effect, we need to show in our scholarship not only that the narratives of literary-journalistic texts are unique in their potential for crafting a self-enclosed universe ruled by formal patterns that are ruled out in all other orders of discourse, but how such patterns specifically apply to American texts<sup>12</sup>. American literary journalism studies scholars, to this end, must defend the reading of literary journalism as a particular ontological and practical activity,

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Rosenbaum, Jeanne Marie-Laskas, and John Jeremiah Sullivan. See also my interview with Barbara Ehrenreich (2015, p. 149-150).

11 But regarding the reading of non-fiction/hybridic/experimental/literary-journalistic prose, this is far from the view espoused by the majority of specialists who have devoted their lives to studying narrative. See, for example, Dorrit Cohn's *The Distinction of Fiction* (1999).

12 On this matter, see for example Mark Z. Muggli's "The Poetics of Joan Didion's Journalism," (1987, p. 402-421). Although I agree with Muggli's point that "close analysis of individual journalistic texts has been rare" (1987, p. 402), I don't think it necessarily follows that "Didion's rhetoric of fact is best approached through the close analysis practiced by critics interpreting individual literary texts" (1987, p. 403). The works Muggli focuses on in his article – Didion's *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968) and *The White Album* (1979) – are not exclusively fictional or journalistic accounts but rather literary-journalistic in nature and intention.



and literary journalism itself as a historical form to be reckoned with by linguists, narratologists, and narrative theorists of every stripe<sup>13</sup>. This is far from the case at present.

Secondly, American literary journalism studies must go further in expanding its emphasis on an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and international study of literary journalism by, for example, reciprocally engaging with the work of disciplines such as Sociology, Anthropology, African American Studies, Gender Studies, Visual Studies, Media Studies, and American Studies, in addition to Journalism and Literary Studies. At present, despite numerous initiatives to connect to other disciplines, the field still inclines towards a certain non-comparativism and disciplinary hermeticism. We need to bring historically separate fields together, theoretically and culturally, to form an inter-disciplinary entity that would variously reflect the contributions of literary journalism to American culture and letters from the eighteenth century to our contemporary moment. This entity is in its nascent stages and will gradually materialize. We need to accelerate this expansion process.

Thirdly, as one of the springboards for such initiatives, American literary journalism scholars must more overtly engage with narrative and critical theory. We need to outline a theoretical framework that can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the trajectory of and innovations in American literary journalism than is currently available. Progress has been made in this area, as evidenced in such diverse studies as Kate Campbell's (ed.) *Journalism, Literature and Modernity* (2000); Laurel Brake's *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender, and Literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (1994); Alfredo Cramerotti's *Aesthetic Journalism: How to Inform without Informing* (2009); Sari Edelstein's *Between the Novel and the News* (2014); John Hartsock's *Literary Journalism and the Aesthetics of Experience* (2016); David T. Humphries's *Different Dispatches: Journalism in American Modernist Prose* (2006); Marie-Laure Ryan's *Narration Across Media: The Language of Storytelling* (2004); and David Shields's *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto* (2010), but American literary journalism studies must create its own theoretical anchors and more fully incorporate theory (especially narrative and reception theory) into its critical canon. To be clear, theory does not have to be a domain for elite professional attainment but can be made to be more genuinely inclusive.

Finally, American literary journalism studies must move beyond the national model that has dominated the institutional structure of the discipline

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13 Seem essay, "Reading Otherwise: *Literary Journalism Studies* as an Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism" forthcoming.

by creating modes of analysis suited to international interconnections, both in regard to past eras and with respect to the present intensified phase of globalization. To this end, the national model of American literary journalism studies has to undergo, to a lesser or greater degree, a sea change in the direction of transnationalism. This is so because globalization has impacted/will further impact the study of world literary journalism/American literary journalism by foregrounding the issues of cosmopolitan and diasporic narratives (fiction and non-fiction), national and comparative models for narrative studies, colonialism and postcolonialism, and theories of contact zones, borders, interculturalism, hybridity, cultural traffic, and transculturation. In this regard, with its more inclusive transnational objectives, American literary journalism studies can adopt a broader definition of literary journalism than has been customary in earlier narratives and histories<sup>14</sup>.

## Conclusion

There is a definite need at present to clearly define and position American literary journalism studies in relation to the fields of literary studies, literary theory, cultural history, literary history, journalism history, and journalism practice. In addition to being a method or technique, the literary journalism of American writers such as Walt Whitman, Fanny Fern, Frederick Douglass, Abraham Cahn, Zora Neale Hurston, Meridel Le Sueur, James Agee, Dorothy Parker, James Baldwin, and Joan Didion, while representing a certain narrative epistemology, documents a tension between “fact” and “art,” uniquely well suited to express and represent American culture. Straddling the boundaries of literature and journalism, literary journalism, as a compositional form, but also as an area of study, can and does serve the public-oriented dimensions of both literature and journalism. We need to show more comprehensively how this is done.

Perhaps the distinction is this: the emerging discipline of American literary journalism studies continues to make significant progress in addressing

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14 As it develops a (theoretically-informed) aesthetics of its own and adopts a more overt relationship with other disciplines, I think American literary journalism studies should more often be associated with the discipline of world literature. Both literary journalism studies and world literature have strong transnational aspirations, studying narrative forms outside of and beyond a single national tradition; both have a tendency to favor encounter and relation – to other texts, cultures, and disciplines; and both have a commitment to a more global scholarship and pedagogy. Like the case of world literature, we are still struggling to find the concepts and tools that permit us truly to study American literary journalism at the global level. Links with world literature can open up important new territories for literary journalism studies.

the importance and specificity of literary journalism for US and global cultures and in creating new models of historical explanation. However, because of disciplinary blind spots and the fact that literary journalism has no academic home defending a corpus or “canon” of such work, the contributions of American literary journalists or literary-journalistic writers have been largely unrecognized and certainly under-discussed and under-appreciated, despite the unquestioned mass popularity of the genre in the 20th century and its growing influence in our current Internet age. A renewed and expanded American literary journalism studies would refresh the terms of intellectual engagement with this elusive hybridic narrative form; impact and shape the disciplinary roles played by mass communications, literary studies, and journalism studies; and in its interdisciplinary dimensions allow us to rethink the role of literary journalism in today’s increasingly troubled world.

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