ANHANG ZUR DIPLOMARBEIT

NARRATIVER JOURNALISMUS
IN US-AMERIKANISCHEN TAGESZEITUNGEN

Diplomarbeit
zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades
„Diplom-Journalistin“

am
Institut für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaften
der Universität Leipzig

Eingereicht bei: Dr. habil. Thomas Schuster

Von: Julia Müller
Matrikelnummer: 8963553
geboren am 5. Oktober 1982 in Erbach
JuliaM@web.de

Bearbeitungszeit: 26. Juni 2007 bis 4. Januar 2008

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Anhang 1: E-Mail von Constance Hale (28. September 2007)

From: Hale, Constance [mailto:connie_hale@harvard.edu]
Sent: Friday, September 28, 2007 1:21 PM
To: nieman-narrative
Subject: RE: narrative digest

Hello Julia.

This is very curious. I answered the identical questions from a student in Korea last week. Any possible connection?

See below for my answers in ALL CAPS.

Best,

Connie Hale

-----Original Message-----
From: nieman-narrative [mailto:nieman-narrative@harvard.edu]
Sent: Thu 9/27/2007 8:58 AM
To: Hale, Constance
Subject: FW: narrative digest

-----Original Message-----
From: JuliaM@web.de [mailto:JuliaM@web.de]
Sent: Friday, August 10, 2007 1:29 PM
To: nieman-narrative@harvard.edu
Subject: narrative digest

I'm a journalism and English major at Leipzig Universitiy, Germany, and I'm writing my master's thesis on narrative journalism in U.S. newspapers. Your website has been incredibly helpful for my research. However, I've still got some questions:

1) How exactly did you choose the pieces for your narrative digest? Are they mostly examples send in by readers or the journalists who wrote them? Or did you browse through the major papers to look for notable texts?
MOSTLY REPORTERS AND EDITORS SEND US PIECES. WE OCCASIONALLY OUT AND LOOK FOR STUFF, BUT ARE MORE LIKELY TO REACH OUT TO EDITORS WE KNOW TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO SEND US PIECES THAT IMPRESSED THEM.
2) Do you believe your narrative digest is a somewhat representative sample of the state of narrative journalism in your country?
NO. WE FAVOR NEWSPAPERS SO RARELY FOCUS ON THE WONDERFUL NARRATIVE JOURNALISM BEING DONE IN MAGAZINES. ALSO, WE TRY TO FEATURE STORIES WRITTEN IN SMALLER PAPERS WITH FEWER RESOURCES AS WELL AS STUFF FROM THE MOST WELL-KNOWN PAPERS AND WRITERS, SO THAT SKEWS OUR SAMPLE.
3) When will the site be updated again?
IT WAS UPDATED IN EARLY SEPT AND WILL UPDATED AGAIN IN A BOUT A WEEK. WE ARE ON A ONCE-A-MONTH SCHEDULE RIGHT NOW, HOPING TO RESUME TWICE A MONTH IN 2008.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks for your help.
Julia

Julia Müller
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Germany
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JuliaM@web.de

Anhang 2: Texte aus dem *Nieman Narrative Digest* (01.01.06 bis 25.05.07)

No	Autor	Titel	Zeitung	Datum
1	Manny Fernandez	When Pennies Fail to Pay the Bill, a Bronx Man Pushes for Change	New York Times	04.05.2007
2	Thomas Curwen	Attacked by a Grizzly	Los Angeles Times	29.04.2007
3	Erika Hayasaki	A Deadly Hush in Room 211 -- Then the Killer Returned	Los Angeles Times	25.04.2007
4	David Finkel	A Grisly Problem, Grateful Iraqis and a Grim Outlook	Washington Post	24.04.2007
5	Sudarsan Raghavan	In an Instant, a Junkyard of Humanity	Washington Post	13.04.2007
6	Scott Calvert	Mandela's Children	Baltimore Sun	08.04.2007
7	Carol Smith	Spy Robert Schaller's Life of Secrecy, Betrayal and Regrets	Seattle Post-Intelligencer	26.03.2007
8	Barry Bearak	Head Trip	New York Times	25.03.2007
9	Stephanie Earls	The Good Fight	Albany Times Union	25.03.2007
10	Amy Harmon	Facing Life With a Lethal Gene	New York Times	18.03.2007
11	Peter Manseau	A Marriage Made in Heaven?	Washington Post	11.03.2007
12	Maureen O'Hagan	Sex-Crime Cop's Pursuit: Who was telling the truth?	Seattle Times	04.03.2007
13	Nicole Foy	Life, Death and the Bottom Line	San Antonio Express-News	04.03.2007
14	Kristen Gelineau	One Man's Quest for Forgiveness, One Woman's Nightmare	Associated Press	24.02.2007
15	Cindy Lange-Kubick	Zach and the Reading Thrones	Lincoln Journal-Star	18.02.2007
16	Kim Hone-McMahan	Gospel Chorus Uplifts Akron Caregiver	Akron Beacon Journal	18.02.2007
17	Sharon Schmickle	A People Torn: Cleo's Story	Minneapolis Star Tribune	18.02.2007
18	Amy Marcus	With Just 42 Known Cases, Drug Trial Is a Delicate Task	Wall Street Journal	29.01.2007
19	Steve Paul	Journey of Forgiveness Isn't Taken Alone	Kansas City Star	28.01.2007
20	Kurt Streeter	Growth on the Gridiron	Los Angeles Times	28.01.2007
21	Staff of The (Baltimore) Sun	The Big Game	Baltimore Sun	28.01.2007
22	Erin Holmes	A Living Nightmare	Chicago Daily Herald	28.01.2007
23	Crocker Stephenson	In a Child's Best Interest	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	27.01.2007
24	Lori Basheda	Dark Books See Light	Orange County Register	24.01.2007
25	Kevin Vaughan	The Crossing	Rocky Mountain News	23.01.2007
26	Warren St. John	Refugees Find Hostility and Hope on Soccer Field	New York Times	21.01.2007
27	Kristin Harty	Lost at Sea	Delaware News Journal	21.01.2007
28	Laura Meckler	The High Price of Keeping Dad Alive	Wall Street Journal	20.01.2007
29	Rita Savard	Peace Signs. Songs. A Flag. A Face-Off. It's Democracy 101.	Lowell (Mass.) Sun	19.01.2007
30	Tom Berg	Heart Surgery's Invisible Man	Orange County Register	15.01.2007
31	Garrett Therolf	Living with a Failed Mission	Los Angeles Times	15.01.2007
32	Kathleen Pierce	On Kerouac's Trail	Lowell (Mass.) Sun	09.01.2007
33	Keith Sharon	That's the Ticket	Orange County Register	08.01.2007
34	Tom Dunkel	Journeying into Jerusalem	Baltimore Sun	07.01.2007
35	Evelio Contreras	Far from Home	Roanoke Times	31.12.2006
36	Abigail Tucker	Two Brothers Make a Family	Baltimore Sun	31.12.2006
37	Diana Keough	Coping When All is Hopeless	Cleveland Plain Dealer	30.12.2006
38	Todd Frankel	How One Racehorse Escaped the Slaughterhouse	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	26.12.2006
39	Kaitlin Manry	The Light Within	Everett, Wa., Herald	24.12.2006
40	Staff of The Dallas Morning News	Yolanda's Crossing	Dallas Morning News	20.12.2006

No	Autor	Titel	Zeitung	Datum
41	Staff of the Los Angeles Times	A Desperate Mother Ignores the Odds	Los Angeles Times	19.12.2006
42	Maura Lerner	A Prayer for Father Tim	Minneapolis Star Tribune	17.12.2006
43	Rukmini Callimachi	Katrina's Nameless Dead	Associated Press	17.12.2006
44	Andy Netzel	Determined to Be a Dad	Alabama Press-Register	17.12.2006
45	Andrea Gurwitt	Walking Wounded	New Jersey Herald News	17.12.2006
46	Leah Y. Latimer	Quarantined	Washington Post	10.12.2006
47	Alice Dembner	After the Fall	Boston Globe	10.12.2006
48	Geoff Edgers	How They Did It	Boston Globe	06.12.2006
49	Harriet Brown	One Spoonful at a Time	New York Times	26.12.2006
50	Marilyn Geewax	Dueling PR Groups Wrestle Over Wal-Mart Policies	Cox News Service	26.11.2006
51	Tom Dunkel	End of the Race for Family Farm	Baltimore Sun	26.11.2006
52	Diane Tennant	Jamestown Mystery: A Grave Story	Virginian-Pilot	26.11.2006
53	Sam Miller	Approaching Zero	Orange County Register	21.11.2006
54	David Finkel	A Working Dream	Washington Post	19.11.2006
55	John Shiffman	Drugnet	Philadelphia Inquirer	19.11.2006
56	Judy Pasternak	Blighted Homeland	Los Angeles Times	19.11.2006
57	Barbara Brotman	The Parting: One Man's Final Journey	Chicago Tribune	18.11.2006
58	Josh Goldstein	A Cholesterol Gamble	Philadelphia Inquirer	12.11.2006
59	Christopher Goffard	A War Only He Can End	Los Angeles Times	11.11.2006
60	Allyson Bird	Recovering Addict Parts With Her Past, Then Her Baby	Palm Beach Post	06.11.2006
61	James O'Neill	Rosie's Journey	Dallas Morning News	05.11.2006
62	Liza Mundy	Making Up for Lost Time	Washington Post	05.11.2006
63	Diana Keough	Tay Sachs: At What Cost?	Cleveland Plain Dealer	05.11.2006
64	Mike Anton	Loss and Rebirth in a '66 Fire	Los Angeles Times	04.11.2006
65	Wes Allison	Shuttle Diplomacy	St. Petersburg Times	02.11.2006
66	Erika Hayasaki	The Daughter	Los Angeles Times	29.10.2006
67	Eli Saslow	A New Game Plan	Washington Post	29.10.2006
68	Jo Ciavaglia	On to Her Next Race	Bucks County (Pa.) Courier-Times	29.10.2006
69	Chris Rose	Hell and Back	Times-Picayune (New Orleans)	22.10.2006
70	Manny Cristosomo	The Weight	The Sacramento Bee	22.10.2006
71	Kurt Streeter	Odyssey of Healing	Los Angeles Times	15.10.2006
72	Elizabeth Leland	The Old White Oak of Mathews	Charlotte Observer	15.10.2006
73	Jeff Seidel	An Assist for Maddie	Detroit Free Press	08.10.2006
74	Bettina Lehovec	Never Say Uncle	Morning News (northwest Arkansas)	07.10.2006
75	G. Wayne Miller	The Growing Season	The Providence Journal	24.09.2006
76	Danica Coto	What Will Happen to Kayla?	Charlotte Observer	24.09.2006
77	Colleen Jenkins	With Scissors, She Cuts Free from Her Past	St. Petersburg Times	23.09.2006
78	Kevin Robbins	Saving Matt: How many people saved a life on the sidelines	Austin American-Statesman	22.09.2006
79	Bob Shaw	Homestead to Homes (Selections from the series)	Pioneer Press (Twin Cities)	17.09.2006
80	Tamara Jones	Sons of the Mothers	Washington Post	11.09.2006

No	Autor	Titel	Zeitung	Datum
81	David Segal	At a Ground Zero Hotel, Room for Miracles	Washington Post	11.09.2006
82	Michelle Nijhuis	Science's Glacial Strides	Christian Science Monitor	11.09.2006
83	Meg Laughlin	Looking Out for Roberta	St. Petersburg Times	02.09.2006
84	Christopher Goffard	Father, Son and Holy Rift	Lost Angeles Times	02.09.2006
85	Bryan Woolley	A Writer Begins: Adventures of a boy reporter	Dallas Morning News	29.08.2006
86	John Schwartz	A New Orleans Home is Reborn, With Persistence	New York Times	23.08.2006
87	Carol Smith	A Life in the Balance	Seattle Post-Intelligencer	21.08.2006
88	Thomas Lake	Free Wheelin'	St. Petersburg Times	20.08.2006
89	Erika Hayasaki	A Painful Course to College	Los Angeles Times	18.08.2006
90	Wes Allison	Republican v. Republican: A cellular division	St. Petersburg Times	13.08.2006
91	Neil Swidey	The Lessons of the Father	Boston Globe	13.08.2006
92	Erika Hayasaki	A Time of Heartbreak and Humor	Los Angeles Times	12.08.2006
93	Paul Salopek	A Tank of Gas, a World of Trouble	Chicago Tribune	29.07.2006
94	Don Seiffert	A Radish's Life	Newton TAB	26.07.2006
95	Michelle Theriault	Risky Surgery Gives Baby a Shot at a Brighter Future	Bellingham (Washington) Herald	23.07.2006
96	Mark Johnson	An American Hero's Fall From Grace	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	22.07.2006
97	Vicki Smith	Slow Death	Associated Press	17.07.2006
98	Valeria Godines	Brainstorm	Orange County Register	09.07.2006
99	Staff of the (Minneapolis) Star-Tribune	Summer at the Lake	Minneapolis Star Tribune	02.07.2006
100	Tamara Jones	The Wrong Man	Washington Post	25.06.2006
101	Cindy Lange-Kubick	A Home for Brissa	Lincoln Journal Star	25.06.2006
102	Susan Snyder	Writing for Their Lives	Philadelphia Inquirer	25.06.2006
103	Tom Feeney	His Wondrous Leap of Faith and Love	Star-Ledger	25.06.2006
104	Dan Neil	Before the Rumble Seat	Los Angeles Times	21.06.2006
105	Tom Dunkel	Offering an Education in Aging	Baltimore Sun	18.06.2006
106	Michael Gartner	A Life Without Left Turns	USA Today	15.06.2006
107	Matt Sedensky	A Sermon of Hatred and Doom...	Associated Press	04.06.2006
108	Thomas Lake	The Gator Terminator	St. Petersburg Times	27.05.2006
109	Mike Dawson	Love You, Miss You, Drive Safe... Peace, CoriAnn	Times Herald-Record	21.05.2006
110	Staff of the Winston-Salem Journal	A Shelter's Tale	Winston-Salem Journal	21.05.2006
111	Lane DeGregory	Good Intentions	St. Petersburg Times	14.05.2006
112	Matt Viser	Dear World	Boston Globe	09.05.2006
113	Maura Lerner	Two in a Million	Minneapolis Star Tribune	07.05.2006
114	Michael LaForgia	Doctor First to Arrive After Shooting	Florida Times-Union	05.06.2006
115	Jane O. Hansen	Through Hell and High Water	Atlanta Journal-Constitution	05.05.2006
116	Lateef Mungin	The Disappearance of Lisa Geise	Atlanta Journal-Constitution	30.04.2006
117	Thomas Lake	The Mysterious Metamorphosis of Ricky Roberts	Florida Times-Union	16.04.2006
118	John Mangels	Plagued by Fear	Cleveland Plain Dealer	26.03.2006
119	Joan Ryan	War Without End	San Francisco Chronicle	26.03.2006
120	Megan Ward	Who Killed Brenda Sue?	Shelby, N.C., Star	26.03.2006

No	Autor	Titel	Zeitung	Datum
121	Howie Padilla	Suddenly It Was Up to Shane	Minneapolis Star Tribune	19.03.2006
122	Lane DeGregory	Letting Go of Dakota	St. Petersburg Times	19.03.2006
123	Andy Newman	A $65 Table, and a Tale to Tell Around It	New York Times	18.03.2006
124	Andrea Elliott	An Imam in America	New York Times	05.03.2006
125	Kevin Cullen	Rakan's War	Boston Globe	26.02.2006
126	Alix Christie	Guarding the Truth	Washington Post	26.02.2006
127	Stacey Burling	Probing a Mind for a Cure	Philadelphia Inquirer	23.02.2006
128	Colleen Kenney	Now Wait Begins for Teen Mother, Wife	Lincoln Journal Star	08.02.2006
129	Janny Scott	Talk About Renting a Hole in the Wall	New York Times	03.02.2006
130	Thomas Lake	Soldier's Final Journey	Florida Times-Union	29.01.2006
131	Christopher Goffard	The $40 Lawyer	St. Petersburg Times	22.01.2006
132	Dave Perry	It's Crowbars and Hydraulics vs. One Stubborn Old Bank Vault	Lowell (Mass.) Sun	19.01.2006
133	Nicole Stricker	Of Meth and Motherhood	Idaho Falls Post Register	15.01.2006
134	Vanessa Gezari	Three Hours in the Dark	St. Petersburg Times	09.01.2006
135	Staff of the Omaha World-Herald	Through Their Eyes: A Band Bus, a Tragedy, a Need to Help	Omaha World-Herald	01.01.2006

Anhang 3: Auflistung der nicht berücksichtigten Texte

Texte, die im Zeitraum 1. Januar 2006 bis 25. Mai 2007 im *Nieman Narrative Digest* veröffentlicht wurden, aber nicht in die Kategorie US-amerikanische Tageszeitung fallen.

Benjamin Harvey
Blog: Destruction Teams Tackling Bird Flu
Associated Press
14. Januar 2006

Joe Richman
Thembi's AIDS Diary
Radio Diaries
19. April 2006

Kathy Lohr
Fort Stewart Families Cope with Strain of Separation
National Public Radio
28. April 2006

Jacqueline Marino
Blood Brothers
Cleveland Magazine
25. Mai 2006

Michelle Nijhuis
Dust and Snow
High Country News (Wochenzeitschrift)
29. Mai 2006

Xan Rice
Death in Somalia
Guardian (Großbritannien)
28. Juni 2006

Matt Kettmann
The Lord Hath No Mercy
Santa Barbara Independent (Wochenzeitung)
29. Juni 2006

Laura Rozen
Three Days in Rome
Mother Jones Magazine
1. Juli 2007

Christie Aschwanden
Is It or Isn't It (Just Another Mouse)?
High Country News (Wochenzeitschrift)
7. August 2007

Stephen Kimber
The Last Best Hope
Halifax Coast (Wochenzeitung)
24. August 2006

Gary Smith
Remember His Name
Sports Illustrated (Zeitschrift)
5. September 2006

Kristy Hebert
What's Left Behind
Farm and Dairy (Wochenzeitung)
14. September 2006

Zachary Goelman
Opening Up the Old Olive Trees
Jewish Independent (Kanada)
26. Oktober 2006

Adrian Nicole LeBlanc
The Ground We Lived On
StoryCorps (Radio)
13. November 2006

Ryan Nadel
Equal Treatment
Jerusalem Post (Israel)
30. November 2006

David Swick
The Zen of Joan Didion
Shambhala Sun (Zeitschrift)
1. Januar 2007

Rebecca Skloot
Why Is It So Damn Hard to Change
O: The Oprah Magazine
1. Januar 2007

Gareth Cook
Untangling the Mystery of the Inca
Wired (Zeitschrift)
1. Januar 2007

Mary Wiltenburg
Casualties of Conscience
Spiegel (Deutschland)
27. Februar 2007
Long feature

Tracie White
Silent Inferno
Stanford Medicine Magazine
1. März 2007

Stewart Nusbaumer
Band of Brothers
American Conservative Magazine
26. März 2007

Ray Ring
Disposable Workers of the Oil and Gas Fields
High Country News (Wochenzeitschrift
2. April 2007

6. Karen Brown
The Effects of War on the Homefront
WFCR (Radio)
11. April 2007

Anhang 4: Codebuch zur Themenanalyse

Die Themenanalyse für die Diplomarbeit „Narrativer Journalismus in US-amerikanischen Tageszeitungen" wird durchgeführt zur Beantwortung der Frage „Welche Themen werden in den untersuchten Tageszeitungsartikeln narrativ umgesetzt?".

Analyseeinheit und -zeitraum

Analyseeinheit sind die Artikel US-amerikanischer Tageszeitungen, die im Untersuchungszeitraum (1. Januar 2006 bis 25. Mai 2007) in der Online-Anthologie *Nieman Narrative Digest* [1] veröffentlicht wurden. Insgesamt beläuft sich das Untersuchungsmaterial auf 135 Texte (Fortsetzungsgeschichten mit mehreren aufeinander folgenden Artikeln werden als ein Text gezählt).

Allgemeine Codieranweisungen

CA1: Lesen und verinnerlichen Sie bitte zunächst alle Definitionen und Erläuterungen, die in diesem Codebuch aufgeführt sind.

CA2: Lesen Sie dann jeweils den ganzen Artikel durch. Identifizieren Sie den zentralen Aspekt des Textes, also das Hauptthema, und ordnen Sie den Text in eine der inhaltlichen Kategorien ein, indem Sie auf dem Codeblatt die entsprechende Spalte markieren.

CA3: Jeder Text wird nur einer inhaltlichen Kategorie zugeordnet. Passt ein Artikel in zwei Kategorien von unterschiedlichem Allgemeinheitsgrad, so ist immer die spezifischere Kategorie zu wählen.

CA4: Texte, die keiner Kategorie zuzuordnen sind, fallen unter „Sonstiges".

Definitionen:

Thema wird hier verstanden als gesellschaftlicher Diskurs, in den das konkrete Geschehen oder Ereignis eingebettet ist, das in dem Text dargestellt wird (vgl. Rössler 2005: 122f.). Im Fall eines Textes über eine von der Droge „Meth" abhängige Mutter wäre als Thema *Drogen* zu codieren. Diese inhaltliche Kategorie zählt zur übergeordneten Kategorie *Gesundheitswesen*.

[1] Abrufbar unter URL: http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/narrative/digest/notable/notablebydate.html (Abruf: 11. August 2007).

Hauptthema eines Textes ist dasjenige Thema, das schwerpunktmäßig behandelt wird (vgl. ebd.). Oft lassen Überschrift und Unterzeile auf den Schwerpunkt schließen. Dennoch ist es unabdingbar, den gesamten Text zu lesen, um dann das schwerpunktmäßig behandelte Thema festzulegen.

Inhaltliche Kategorie: Liste der Themengebiete

001 Historische Ereignisse, Rückblicke

100 Innenpolitik
101 Justiz
102 Parteien
103 Porträts einzelner Politiker

200 Krieg/gewalthaltige Konflikte
201 Kampfhandlungen
202 Soldatenschicksale
203 Hilfe für Zivilisten
204 Frieden/Friedensaktivisten
205 Flüchtlinge

300 Soziales/Sozialordnung
301 Ehe, Familie, Jugend, Kinder
302 Armut/Perspektivlosigkeit
303 ethnische Minderheiten
304 Immigration

400 Wirtschaft
401 Konjunktur- und Wirtschaftslage
402 Unternehmen
403 Landwirtschaft
404 Bauwesen- und Städteplanung

500 Unglücke
501 Verkehrsunfälle
502 Schiffsunglücke
503 Naturkatastrophen

504 Brände
505 Minenunglücke
506 Sonstige Unfälle

600 Gesundheitswesen
601 Physische Erkrankungen
602 Psychische Erkrankungen
603 Behinderungen
604 Drogensucht

700 Kriminalität
701 Mord, Totschlag
702 Vergewaltigung
703 Umweltkriminalität
704 Wirtschaftskriminalität
705 Terrorismus
706 Amokläufe
707 andere individuelle Straftaten

800 Gesellschaft
801 Religion/Spiritualität
802 Bildung
803 Wissenschaft/Technik
804 Natur/Tiere
805 Kunst/Kultur
806 Sport

900 „Slice of life"
901 Porträts
902 Alltagsgeschichten

1001 Sonstiges

KATEGORIENDEFINITIONEN

001 **Historische Ereignisse, Rückblicke:** Diese Kategorie ist nicht weiter untergliedert. Hier werden Texte eingeordnet, die historische Ereignisse zum Thema haben (z. B. die Besiedlung der USA) bzw. geschichtliche Rückblicke und Erinnerungen darstellen. Beispiele: „Guarding the Truth"; „A Writer Begins: Adventures of a Boy Reporter"; „Jamestown Mystery: A Grave Story".

100 **Innenpolitik:** Alle Themen, die sich mit Bereichen der Innenpolitik befassen.

101 Justiz: Umfasst den Bereich der Rechtssprechung und Rechtspflege, z. B. Gesetzesänderungen, Gerichtsverhandlungen, Urteile, Justizirrtümer. Beispiel: „Sex-Crime Cop's Pursuit: Who was Telling the Truth?".

102 Parteien: Umfasst die Bereiche Parteipolitik, politische Programme, innerparteiliche Angelegenheiten. Beispiel: „Republican v. Republican: A cellular division".

103 Porträts einzelner Politiker: Charakterstudien, Profile von Politikern. Beispiel: „The Lessons of the Father".

200 **Krieg/gewalthaltige Konflikte:** Umfasst die Bereiche Streitkräfte und Militär, Auswirkungen und Folgen von Kriegen.

201 Kampfhandlungen: In diese Kategorie gehören Texte über militärische Aktionen, Angriffe, Bombardements. Beispiel: „In an Instant, a Junkyard of Humanity".

202 Soldatenschicksale: Hierunter fallen Texte über Gefallene, Kriegsverletzte, Kriegsveteranen. Beispiele: „Soldier's Final Journey"; „War Without End".

203 Hilfe für Zivilisten: Diese Kategorie umfasst Hilfsaktionen für Kriegsgebiete und Krisenregionen, Hilfe für zivile Opfer. Beispiele: „Rakan's War", „Odyssey of Healing".

204 Frieden/Friedensaktivisten: Darunter fallen Aktionen und Proteste von Kriegsgegnern, z. B. Anti-Kriegs-Demonstrationen.

205 Flüchtlinge: Wird codiert bei Texten über Person, die durch politische Zwangsmaßnahmen oder Kriege ihre Heimat verlassen mussten und Zuflucht in den USA gesucht haben. Beispiel: „A People Torn: Cleo's Story".

300 **Soziales/Sozialordnung:** Beinhaltet alle Bereiche des Sozialstaats bzw. des gesellschaftlichen Zusammenlebens und der Probleme, die dabei auftreten können.

301 Ehe, Familie, Kinder: Das familiäre Zusammenleben betreffend, Probleme innerhalb der Familie, Adoptionen. Beispiele: „Recovering Addict Parts With Her Past, Then Her Baby"; "Two Brothers Make A Family"; „Good Intentions".

302 Armut/Perspektivlosigkeit: Diese Kategorie umfasst Texte, die die Lebensverhältnisse sozialer schwacher Menschen beschreiben. Dazu zählt auch das Problem der Arbeitslosigkeit. Beispiel: „Writing For Their Lives". Ausgenommen sind Texte, die sich explizit auf die Situation ethnischer Minderheiten beziehen; sie werden in der Kategorie 303 erfasst.

303 ethnische Minderheiten: Texte über die besondere Lebenssituation von ethnischen Minderheiten in den USA (Armut, Diskriminierung, Gewalt, Jugendgangs). Beispiele: „Making Up for Lost Time", „A Working Dream", „The Good Fight". Ausgenommen sind Texte, die explizit die Problematik der Einwanderung thematisieren; sie werden in der Kategorie 304 erfasst.

304 Immigration: legale und illegale Einwanderung betreffend; Einzelschicksale von Immigranten. Beispiel: „A New Home for Brissa".

400 Wirtschaft: Umfasst alle Bereich wirtschaftlicher Betätigung, d. h. die Erzeugung, der Verbrauch, der Umlauf und die Verteilung von Gütern und Dienstleistungen aller Art.

401 Konjunktur- und Wirtschaftslage: Die wirtschaftliche Situation allgemein betreffend (Strukturwandel, sinkende Einnahmen). Beispiel: „Slow Death".

402 Unternehmen: Texte über einzelne Unternehmen, ihre Strategien und Marktaktivitäten. Beispiel: „Duelling PR Groups Wrestle Over Wal-Mart Policies".

403 Landwirtschaft: In diese Kategorie fallen Texte über die landwirtschaftliche Erzeugung von pflanzlichen oder tierischen Produkten und die Situation der Landwirte. Beispiele: „A Radish's Life"; „End of the Race for Family Farm".

404 Bauwesen: Alle Aktivitäten das Bauwesen, Stadtentwicklung und Stadtplanung betreffend. Beispiel:. „Homestead to Homes".

500 Unglücke: Diese Kategorie umfasst Unfälle und Katastrophen und deren Folgen. Als Unfälle werden alle ungewollten negativen Ereignisse mit oft schwerwiegenden Folgen verstanden, die durch menschliches oder technisches Versagen ausgelöst werden.

501 Verkehrsunfälle: Darunter fallen Unfälle mit Pkw, Lkw und Fußgängern, Busunglücke, Fahrradunfälle, Flugzeugabstürze. Beispiel: „Through their Eyes: A Band Bus, a Tragedy, a Need to Help"

502 Schiffsunglücke: Unfälle im Wasser, an denen ein Schiff beteiligt ist, Schiffbrüche, Havarien. Beispiel: „Living With A Failed Mission".

503 Naturkatastrophen: Zu dieser Kategorie zählen Texte über Naturereignissen mit negativen Folgen für den Menschen (Erdbeben, Tsunamis, Überschwemmungen, Stürme, Vulkanausbrüche etc.) Beispiel: „Through Hell and High Water"

504 Brände: Unglücke mit sich unkontrolliert ausbreitendem Feuer; auch die Arbeit der Feuerwehr/Rettungskräfte. Beispiel: „Loss and Rebirth in a '66 Fire".

505 Grubenunglücke: Betrifft Unfälle, die sich beim Abbau von Bodenschätzen unter Tage ereignen. Beispiel: „Three Hours in the Dark".

506 Sonstige Unfälle: Unfälle im Haushalt, in der Natur, etc. Beispiel: „Attacked by a Grizzly".

600 **Gesundheitswesen:** Diese Kategorie umfasst alle Beeinträchtigungen von Körper und Geist. Es geht um Schicksale einzelner Patienten (wie gehen sie mit ihren Krankheiten, Gebrechen, Behinderungen, Süchten um; wie beeinträchtigt dies ihr Umfeld).

601 Physische Erkrankungen: Etwa Krebs, Hepatitis, Oberschenkelhalsbruch. Beispiele: „After The Fall"; „A New Game Plan".

602 Psychische Erkrankungen: Etwa Depressionen, Magersucht. Beispiele: „Brainstorm"; „A Spoonful At a Time".

603 Behinderungen: Geistige und körperliche Behinderungen, etwa Autismus. Beispiele: „Never Say Uncle", „In a Child's Best Interest

604 Drogensucht: Abhängigkeit von Substanzen, die einen Rauschzustand auslösen (etwa Heroin, Kokain, Crystal Meth, Cannabis, Alkohol). Beispiel: „Of Meth and Motherhood"

700 **Kriminalität:** Diese Kategorie beinhaltet alle Vergehen, die im juristischen Sinne als Straftat angesehen werden.

701 Mord, Totschlag: Darunter fallen u. a. Schießereien, ungelöste Mordfälle. Beispiele: „Who Killed Brenda Sue?", „Doctor First to Arrive After Shooting".

702 Vergewaltigung: Sexuelle Übergriffe, die gegen den Willen des Opfers stattfinden. Beispiel: „One Man's Quest for Forgiveness, One Woman's Nightmare".

703 Umweltkriminalität: Verstöße gegen den Schutz der Umwelt, etwa illegale Entsorgung von umweltschädlichen Materialien. Beispiel: „Blighted Homeland".

704 Wirtschaftskriminalität: Straftaten, die wirtschaftliche Bezüge aufweisen, etwa Geldwäsche, illegaler Medikamentenhandel. Beispiel: „Drugnet".

705 Terrorismus: Politisch motivierte Gewalttaten wie Anschläge und Attentate und deren Folgen. Beispiele: „Looking out for Roberta".

706 Amokläufe: Blindwütiges Töten mit einer Schusswaffe und die Folgen (wie gehen Familien der Opfer damit um). Beispiel: „A Deadly Hush in Romm 211 – Then the Killer Returned".

707 andere individuelle Straftaten

800 Gesellschaft: Diese Kategorie umfasst Aspekte der sozialen Interaktion, die das menschliche Zusammenleben ausmachen. Gesellschaft wird nicht im engeren, soziologischen Sinn als definierte Gruppe von Personen verstanden, sondern nach Rössler (2005: 123f.) als Gesamtheit der Dinge, die die soziale Interaktion betreffen.

801 Religion und Spiritualität: In diese Kategorie fallen Texte über Religiosität und Glauben, spirituelle Erfahrungen, unterschiedliche Glaubensrichtungen (Christentum, Islam, Judentum, Hinduismus, Buddhismus, etc.). Beispiele: „An Imam in America"; „A Prayer for Father Tim".

802 Bildung: Meint die Entfaltung und Entwicklung von Wissen und Fähigkeiten; die Kategorie bezieht sich sowohl auf Bildungsinstitutionen wie Schulen und Universitäten als auch auf Bildung im weitesten Sinne, etwa den Prozess des Erwachsenwerdens. Beispiele: „Zach and the Reading Thrones"; „A Painful Course to College".

803 Wissenschaft/Technik: Umfasst die Bereiche Forschung und Entwicklung in allen Feldern der Wissenschaft; Porträts einzelner Forscher. Sollte der Text verknüpft sein mit der Darstellung einer Krankheit/eines Patientenschicksals, so wird er dann unter 803 codiert, wenn die Forschungsprozess bzw. der Forscher im Mittelpunkt stehen, nicht die Krankheit bzw. der Patient). Beispiele: „Offering an Education in Aging"; „Probing a Mind for a Cure".

804 Natur, Tiere: Darunter fallen alle Texte zu den Bereichen Umwelt und Tiere, etwa über das Waldsterben, die Geschichte eines Tierheims, der Verlust eines geliebten Haustiers. Ausgenommen ist Umweltkriminalität (siehe 703). Beispiele: „Letting Go of Dakota"; „A Shelter's Tale"; „The Old White Oak of Mathews".

805 Kunst/Kultur: Darunter fallen Texte aus den Bereichen Literatur, Musik, Theater, Tanz, bildende Kunst, Film. Beispiele: „How They Did It", „On Kerouac's Track".

806 Sport: Sportliche Betätigungen aller Art, Wettkämpfe, außergewöhnliche Leistungen, Porträts von Athleten, einzelnen Mannschaften. Beispiele: „His Wondrous Leap of Faith and Love"; „The Big Game".

900 **„Slice of Life“:** Diese Kategorie umfasst Texte, die typisch für den narrativen Journalismus und schwer in die bislang aufgeführten Kategorien einzuordnen sind. Es handelt sich um Texte, die ein „Stück wahres Leben“ zeigen wollen. Die Bezeichnung stammt von Connery (1992b: 7), angelehnt an den Journalisten Stephen Crane. Laut Harrington (2005: XIX) zeigen diese Texte „the acts of ordinary people and their everyday lives“ jenseits der üblichen Nachrichtenfaktoren. Dabei lässt sich unterscheiden zwischen Porträts und der Darstellung kurioser Alltagsgeschichten.

901 Porträts: Hierunter fallen Texte über „gewöhnliche“ Menschen mit ungewöhnlichen Geschichten. Beispiele: „The $40 Lawyer“; „Dark Books See Light“.

902 Alltagsgeschichten: Umfasst Anekdoten und kuriose Geschehnisse aus dem Alltag. Beispiel: „It’s Crowbars and Hydraulics vs. One Stubborn Old Bank Vault“; „Talk About Renting a Hole in the Wall“.

1001 **Sonstiges:** In diese Sammelkategorie fallen alle Texte, die keiner der oben aufgeführten Kategorien zuzuordnen sind.

Anhang 5: Verteilung der Zeitungen/Texte im *Nieman Narrative Digest*

(Untersuchungszeitraum 1. Januar 2006 bis 25. Mai 2007)

Nr.	ZEITUNG	Anzahl der Texte
1	Los Angeles Times	13
2	Washington Post	11
3	St. Petersburg Times	10
4	New York Times	9
5	Baltimore Sun	6
6	Boston Globe	5
7	Orange County Register	5
8	Associated Press	4
9	Philadelphia Inquirer	4
10	Cleveland Plain Dealer	3
11	Dallas Morning News	3
12	Florida Times-Union	3
13	Lowell (Mass.) Sun	3
14	Minneapolis Star Tribune	3
15	Atlanta Journal-Constitution	2
16	Charlotte Observer	2
17	Chicago Tribune	2
18	Lincoln Journal Star	2
19	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	2
20	Minneapolis Star Tribune	2
21	Seattle Post-Intelligencer	2
22	Wall Street Journal	2
23	Akron Beacon Journal	1
24	Alabama Press-Register	1
25	Albany Times Union	1
26	Austin American-Statesman	1
27	Bellingham (Washington) Herald	1
28	Bucks County (Pa.) Courier-Times	1
29	Chicago Daily Herald	1

Nr.	ZEITUNG	Anzahl der Texte
30	Christian Science Monitor	1
31	Cox News Service	1
32	Delaware News Journal	1
33	Detroit Free Press	1
34	Everett, Wa., Herald	1
35	Idaho Falls Post Register	1
36	Kansas City Star	1
37	Lincoln Journal-Star	1
38	Lost Angeles Times	1
39	Morning News (northwest Arkansas)	1
40	New Jersey Herald News	1
41	Newton TAB	1
42	Omaha World-Herald	1
43	Palm Beach Post	1
44	Pioneer Press (Twin Cities)	1
45	Roanoke Times	1
46	Rocky Mountain News	1
47	San Antonio Express-News	1
48	San Francisco Chronicle	1
49	Seattle Times	1
50	Shelby, N.C., Star	1
51	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	1
52	Star-Ledger	1
53	The Providence Journal	1
54	The Sacramento Bee	1
55	Times Herald-Record	1
56	Times-Picayune (New Orleans)	1
57	USA Today	1
58	Virginian-Pilot	1
59	Winston-Salem Journal	1

Anhang 6: Interviewleitfaden

Interviewleitfaden

zur Diplomarbeit „Narrativer Journalismus in US-amerikanischen Tageszeitungen"

Die fett gedruckten Fragen bzw. Themen sollen auf jeden Fall angesprochen werden. Die aufgeführten Stichworte und Fragen dienen als Anhaltspunkte für Nachfragen.

Themenfeld	**Fragen/Stichworte**
Begriffsklärung/Annäherung	**Was verstehen Sie unter narrativem Journalismus?** o assoziative Stichworte zum narrativen Journalismus o evtl. andere Namen für diese Art des Schreibens o Wie unterscheidet er sich von anderen Formen des Journalismus'? o Kriterien, wann journalistischer Text narrativ ist **Welche Funktionen kann narrativer Journalismus in der Tageszeitung übernehmen?**
Methoden und Arbeitsweisen	**Themenfelder: Wo einsetzbar? Wo eher nicht?** o Eindruck nach Themenanalyse: persönliche Schicksale, Krankheiten, Unglücke besonders geeignet **Herangehensweise/Recherchemethoden** o Wie und wo finden Sie Ihre „stories"? o Beschreiben Sie den Rechercheprozess o Besonderheiten: rekonstruierte Szenen, innere Monologe, Geschichte aus Sicht eines Protagonisten o Problem der Glaubwürdigkeit (Fälschungsskandale) o Wie gehen Sie mit Quellenangaben, Verweisen auf Faktizität um? **Schreibprozess** o Wie strukturieren Sie Ihre Texte? Spannungsbogen; Entwicklung der Charaktere o Welche Rolle spielt literarische Sprache? **Bedeutung der Erzählstimme** o Einstellung zum „Erzähler-Ich" im Text? o Ausgeprägte Stimme als Ausdruck der Persönlichkeit des Journalisten? ggf. Fragen zu individuellen Artikeln, basierend auf der Textanalyse

Stand und Bedeutung des narrativen Journalismus'	**Einstellung in der Redaktion zum narrativen Journalismus:** o Wie wird er wahrgenommen, bewertet? o Akzeptanz im Vergleich zu „regular newswriting" o Relevanz in der Redaktion o Image der Erzähljournalisten **Beziehung zwischen editor und reporter:** o Schwierig, narrative Texte zu verkaufen? o Genug finanzielle und zeitliche Ressourcen für narrativen Journalismus?
Perspektiven	**Tendenz in Ihrer Redaktion: Mehr oder weniger narrativer Journalismus?** o Gründe für diese Entwicklung **Ökonomische Situation:** o Gibt es Sparzwänge? Wurden Jobs gestrichen? o Wie beeinflusst das Ihre Arbeit? Veränderte Arbeitsbedingungen? **Zukunft der Form/Zeitalter der print-digital-hybrids** o Wo ist der Platz des Erzähljournalismus'? o Ergänzung zu Nachrichten im Internet? o Narrativer Journalismus als Mittel aus der Medienkrise?
Ad-hoc-Fragen	Ergeben sich möglicherweise aus dem Gesprächsverlauf; sprechen Aspekte an, die im Leitfaden nicht verzeichnet, aber für Themenstellung bedeutsam sind.

Anhang 7: Transkripte der Leitfadengespräche

Interview mit David Finkel (*Washington Post*) am 13. September 2007

What is your exact position at the Washington Post?

I'm an enterprise reporter and a staff writer. I mean, I don't do investigative stuff. But I do have a special field. Some people would say narrative, some people would say long-winded.

And how long have you been working here?

I came here in 1990 to work as a staff writer for the Sunday magazine and did that through much of the 90s. And then, I switched back and forth between the national and the foreign desk. At the moment, I'm on leave to work on a book but I'm still doing stuff for the Post while I'm over there. If you want some examples, there are four pieces I've done this year out of Iraq and they were pure narratives. They are not bad examples, I guess.

Yeah, I actually read some of them. Is your book also going to be about Iraq?

Yeah. I'm spending an entire deployment with an infantry platoon that went over as part of the so-called 'surge'. I met them at Fort Riley in Kansas as they were preparing to leave and I'm basically hanging out with them until the end, till they come back. And the book is about what happens to 750 versions of American believers when they get there at this particular moment of war – which is not the most optimistic moment. That's the idea. So it means being there. It's just an extension of what I do for the newspaper. It's all reported. It's not fiction, it's nonfiction, it's all based on observed reporting.

Do you already know when it's going to get published?

Well, I mean, I have a contract, and…. no, I don't. The deployment doesn't end till May and from then, I'll start writing.

Okay, so I've got a couple of questions about Narrative Journalism. First of all, could you tell me what you think Narrative Journalism is? Or what makes a text qualify as narrative?

It's … I hate the word. It just makes my skin crawl. I guess the easiest explanation is it's stories, with all the elements of telling a story. You know, storytelling has been a part of human communication since the beginning of human communication. You sit around, and if it's a good story, you stay and listen to it. If it's a bad story, you kind of get up and wander away. But it's using the elements of storytelling, but all factual. It's not first person, it's not memoir, it's telling other people's stories in a narrative fashion. Does that make sense?

Yes, of course. Tell me, why don't you like the word, then?

You know, it's like 'Why don't I like the word journalist better than reporter?'. I don't know. It's just something about the word. I don't know.

Is it because people keep using it and don't really know what it's about?

No, it's just that there's something hoity about the word. But there's also something hoity about the word hoity, so there you go. I don't know. How else can I help you? This is going well…

Would you say that it's about telling a story that makes it different from other forms of journalism like news-reporting?

Well, they have the same basic elements, you know. You collect facts, assembled in a certain way, to tell a story. In this case, when I do it I think it takes a little time to understand the story well enough to tell a fair representation of the story. It involves… It's kind of a methodical thing. You come up with an idea, and the idea can either be story-driven or theme-driven. You know, in a story, something happens, something changes. Grab a corner of that and tell a story about that story. An example is after 9/11, when the World Trade Center towers went down, I was up there the next day. Basically, I made my way down to the place and stood on the corner and made dispatches to the paper. I don't know what got in the paper and what didn't. But I was there telling the story of that corner, not the whole thing. A newspaper story is often very horizontal. It's a survey story where you talk to a lot of people and then you write a paragraph about each, you assemble the paragraphs. Narratives aren't horizontal, they're vertical. They start with something and go as deep as you can. In my case, I think it's very much driven by coming to an understanding at some point to what the end is. At the beginning, you don't know what the story is. But spending enough time with them so you feel like you have a story to tell – not the story to tell but a story to tell – that you can tell very thoroughly. And there is always a point in the reporting when in the morning, I'm just thinking, you know, I panic because I have no clue what to think. And sometimes, it's just like 'Yeah, that's the story I could tell'. And then, it's just a matter of telling it, you know, through all the techniques I'm sure you've heard of before. Dialogue, sensory reporting, things like that.

What would you say, what kinds of topics lend themselves to a narrative approach?

Well, if it is something thematic rather than story-driven… An example is a series I did, I guess in 2005, this was the Pulitzer-series I did. What happened was my editor said to me: 'What do you think the chief export of the United States is at this point?'. And we went back and forth, and he finally guided me to the conclusion that it's not so much tangible, the commodity at this point is something intangible, it's democracy. So we're trying to spread democracy throughout the world, that was the chief foreign policy of George Bush at that point. So you have his very general thing and you got to find a way to tell a story about the exportation of democracy. And so very methodically, I looked at a world map trying to figure out a country I wanted to concentrate on. And Yemen came out to be the country for a variety of reasons. And then, it was just this small democracy promotion project… Hang on a second (spricht mit einem Kollegen, der vorbeigeht)
So I had found the country, and then I looked at all the projects that were going on in Yemen, and it was the matter of choosing one that I thought offered the best possibilities for storytelling. And then it was a matter of talking to the people who were overseeing the project and telling them what I tell anybody when I launch a story: 'I'd like to do it. Here are examples of my work, so you can see how I work. You need to understand that this is a long-term project. You need to understand that my obligation isn't to you, it's to readers who don't know anything about you. You need to understand that you can't see the story until it appears in print and a million other people are seeing it, and if you play my game…' And they said yes, so let's spend a year working on a project, basically following the idea democracy from the White House through all the funding channels, over to a very obscure corner of Yemen the U.S. was interested in for security reasons. They tried to bring together a bunch of Sheiks who wanted a little bit of democracy… And it was just a matter of telling the story of what happened in that project as a way to tell what happens sometimes in these long-term projects.

Is is quite easy for you to get access to people?

Working for the Post helps… I think having a body of work to show helps them understand what I'm trying to do. And I think when you sit down and talk, they can get a sense from you pretty quickly, if they trust you or don't trust you. And I can get a sense from them about the same thing. You know, sometimes they turned me down, sometimes I turned them down. Sometimes, you can tell it's not working out. And then, sometimes it does. And that was one I think that did. So that was storytelling but again theme-based. Another quick example is – I'll try to make it quick – the same editor said: 'Why don't you try to write a series of stories about worldwide illegal migration?' And he said: 'The thing is, this is not news that this goes on, we all know this, but maybe we can find examples, going along on their journeys, the journeys themselves, what they are talking about as a way to get across numbers and facts. So again, it was the same thing…. So in that case, what we decided to find was the worst place in the world, and according to humans' rights progress and NGOs it is Afghanistan. This is Afghanistan in February 2001, when it's still under Taliban control. And then, we decided we would go to the worst place and follow people to the next place. Wherever they stopped, that's where the story would stop. And the next story would begin and follow people from that place to the next place. So, again, it's just taking something broad and tapering, narrowing it in a way until you find the place you wanna go and until you find the characters you wanna write about.

So there's first the idea, and then you go look for the story?

Yes, start with an idea, find the characters and then just go along and see what happens. With the understanding that whatever is going to happen is not what you think is going to happen when you first get on that airplane.

We've already talked about the whole process of reporting. Would you say that for your work, it usually takes long because you have to get so close?

I like it to take long because it takes me a while to have some confidence for telling a true version of truth, if that makes sense.

You're trying to get as much as possible.

I mean, it's easy to walk into a situation full of assumptions and find things that support your assumptions. I think it takes longer to get past assumptions and realize what the deal is. So if I couple that with the fact that writing isn't exactly the most joyous thing for me, I report as long as possible. But, you know, I've done three stories from Iraq this year, all done in three or four hours. When I find something that seems to suggest a story, I report it quickly and I sit down and I write it in an hour and I send it in. And those have gotten me a lot more reactions than anything I've done there. So, these aren't things where I spend months and months of agonizing reporting.

Okay, so it can work quickly.

It can work quickly. But again, I'm going into those stories being able to draw some depth of understanding because I've been there for so long. So it's not like I just walked in and I figured out where I am and sort of shake my head and leave on the airplane. I'm already there. I think these stories can be done in 200 inches, they could be done in 100 inches and I think they can be done in 30 inches.

What's your opinion on reconstructed scenes? There are quite some discussions going on about that topic. What's your opinion?

I changed on this. I think when I was beginning to do this, I would do it not giving a hint to readers that this was reconstructed because this would interrupt the narrative. And I was sure of the facts. But that's changed, I think I matured and well, I also think that the level of trust in journalism and journalists has changed since I'm doing this. And now, people really do tend to mistrust us.

How do you make sure that people do trust you?

I think it's important to be as transparent as possible. So now, I don't care if I'm interrupting the narrative. There has to be a clue like 'he said later', 'he reconstructed later', 'in accounts that came later'. Does this interrupt the integrity of the whole thing? I don't know. I think I used to be hot-blooded about it and now, I'm hot-blooded the other way. It's just that at the first signs of disbelief, the whole thing is lost. So I think it's just crucial to be as transparent as possible.

And you always try to attribute it to somebody?

There can be different versions. Some people do this within the body of the story, I'm sure you've also seen those little boxes outside the story that say how the story was done. Anne [Hull, Washington Post, Anmerk. d. Verf.] is interesting about this. You've got to talk to Anne about this. But at this point, I like to deal with it within the story itself. I mean, I think it needs to be done. What do you think?

Actually, I'm not sure. I mean, I understand those who say it interrupts the narrative. And I've read some pieces where you constantly found something like 'he recalls' and sometimes they also quoted two sources recalling the same thing. And I felt that this interrupted the flow of the story. But then again, I see the point. I see that people try to make sure that it feels real.

Yeah. But then again, like anything, there are people who do it well and people who do it poorly. So, if you come across an example where someone is transparent but does it very well, then I think you have a model for your thesis. So here's an example how well it can be done and why it is important, and here's an example of how terrible it can be done. It's like anything, I mean. When I was trying to figure out how to do this stuff I would just analyze pieces. How long were paragraphs, how long were sentences, how were the rhythms going on? How did the thing flow? All that. So if you have a good example and you're studying it, you learn how to do this clunky transparency and not be clunky. And if you have a bad example, you learn how not to do it.

Well, you've already said that you don't like the writing part of it. But I found that, when I read your pieces, it doesn't seem like you don't like to write. So I was just wondering what role language plays when you're writing.

I write it and I read it back and I try to look at it and ask: 'What is the effect of that sentence? Is it rising or falling? Does it carry the reader kind of through it?' I do that. Some people, when they write, they start in the middle of the story. And I've never been able to do that. I really do wish I could figure it out, it would be faster. But I have to get the first sentence and when it seems right, then I'll get the next one. It's fantasy but I like to think that sentence builds upon the previous sentence. And that's again, in terms of all these things, the progression of the story, the progression of rhythms and things like that.

Do you structure that before you write? Do you draw an outline or something like that?

Well, I take all my material and I index it pretty clearly and then, out of that, I'll do a very general outline, just scribble something down like 'This story has seven sections, here's

what I want to do in the first section, here's what I want to accomplish in the second section' and so on. I know people who do an outline of pages and pages, very specific, and I don't do that.

But still, you have some kind of development in mind?

Yes, because I have the end in mind. Not the exact words, necessarily, but I know where I want the story to go, and it's just a matter of building it so it gets there and resonates in some kind of way.

Another thing you've already mentioned is the first person in narratives. What's your opinion on that?

I don't like that.

Why not?

Well, it might be because … Well, the good part about it is it makes the transitions easier. And maybe there's a bit of honesty to it. But the reason I don't like it overall is that there was a period in the 80s when so many pieces where being done first person, and it felt show-offy. 'I'm here with so and so. I'm doing this. We went here.' I just don't give a shit about the reporter. I know reporters. They are not very interesting. The people they write about are interesting, or the situation they're writing about is interesting. So I wanna read about the situation. And I don't really care about the reporter. It's an overreaction on my part but I read so many bad pieces that I just don't like the writer wanting the reader to think 'Well, that is one cool writer'.

But sometimes, you have these situations when you become part of the story. How do you deal with that?

Because of my presence?

Yeah.

Well, my presence effects my surrounding. Sure, I understand that. But I think if you spend a long time on a story, there is a point where people get used to you. They relax. And you see that what might be going on is as if you weren't there. There was a magazine piece I did in the mid-90ies – probably the thing I ended up getting the most reactions from. The story was about the relationship between a family and it's television set. And the main character was this very nice, great woman who just unashamedly, unapologetically loved TV. Four or five TVs in the house, on all the time. The kids had TVs, everybody had TVs. And at first, I was talking to her and she asked 'Are you getting what you need?' 'Yeah.' I mean she wasn't used to reporters. She had done nothing important. I was there because she represented something interesting about society. And the only thing she knew about reporters was what she'd seen on TV. But that day, I really just spent the day getting biographical material, like number of kids, when did you meet, stuff like that. And a few weeks later, I spent several weeks reporting this story, there was a thing the story rises to. I mean, I can't remember what it was but Bonny turns around and she's saying something like 'Sometimes, I try to go to sleep without TV and I'll be in bed and I'll just think about all kinds of things. I'll think about the president, I'll think about NAFTA, I'll think about this and I'll think about that and then, I'll think: Nobody wants to hear what I'm thinking. So, I'll turn on the TV and I'll drift off and that's how I get to sleep.' Any that's a moment when I realized this story really was about loneliness. And it took a while for finally getting to that point where she would talk. That was not going to happen the first or second day. And that happened to me, I was there, she was talking to me but it was inside of a moment

when I wasn't there. And I think if you spend enough time, people relax and start to talk to you.

Another thing is I read some pieces where people refrained from using the word 'I' but instead used something like 'a reporter for the New York Times'...

Yes, or 'the traveler' and 'the visitor'.

Yes. And that felt...

It even draws more attention to itself.

Yes, I mean, it would be much easier to just say 'I'.

But why would you have to use 'told me'? Why can't you just say 'said'? I mean, my friends who work for the New Yorker make it a case why it's important to them. But there's always a way to stay in the background.

But still, even if you don't use the word 'I', there's still your personal voice that's telling the story.

That's true.

And how important is that voice to you?

It depends how loud your voice is. It depends on what you're trying to accomplish with your voice. If you're trying to get the reader think 'What a great writer', that's going to be a pretty loud voice. If you're trying to get the reader think 'What a great story', then your voice won't be so loud.

But when I read some of your pieces, I had the feeling that you could tell that this is you writing and not somebody else.

Well, I don't want to be a version of every other voice. I don't want to be stripped down and neutral. I can't speak for anyone else but I know in my case these stories that I'm writing, I write them when I feel I have arrived at the point when I can write a story and I know what I'm talking about. And it's not their story. No one ever reads my stories, the subjects of my stories are never thrilled with them. They don't disagree, there's nothing factually wrong. They don't disagree with the proportions. But often, this is not as sweet as they might have thought. And it shouldn't be. It's not for them, it's about them. And also... I think what you're saying is right. My presence in the story affects the story. I always keep a notebook out so there's a reminder: 'I'm not a friend, I'm a reporter and I'm going to write about this.' I want that obstacle to be there so it doesn't ever feel so cozy that they feel they're being seduced. It's not a pure thing but at some point, I get the feeling I got a story to tell that seems fair to me, so I'll tell the story.

Now I'd like to talk not so much about your writing but about the overall attitudes towards this kind of writing at this paper here and at papers in general.

Good. I'd like to read what you find out.

How is it perceived here at the Washington Post?

It's embraced. It's important. It's part of the core. The paper strips itself down because of the internet, because of everything that's happening to daily newspapers. But it's core...

Some perhaps got it by what readers want but some also got it because the editors want to have a narrative, too. Narrative is not a dominant thing but it's one of them. The premium here is on reporting, and that's why I wanted to work here. And I consider my pieces reported pieces. I don't like holes in stories where it feels like the writer has written around a bit of reporting. Reporting is the premium, investigative political reporting, foreign reporting. All these things are cores. And the people running it have an interest in Narrative Journalism. So it is important here. But they want good versions of it. They don't want bad versions. And they're trying to figure that out because we have good versions in our paper and we have bad versions. It's one of the few places… There aren't that many places that run this anymore.

That's what I've heard. I guess it's also because it often takes quite a long time and it's expensive. How's the situation here? Are you getting all the time and the resources?

Look at the Yemen series. I spent a year on a subject that produces three stories. I wrote three stories about that. People haven't woken up in Washington thinking 'I wonder what happened in Yemen today. I have to rush off and get the paper!' This does not exactly boost circulation. But the paper felt it was an important topic, and they wanted this reported in a narrative way. So they supported it. I mean, I lived in Yemen for four months that year. It was not a cheap project but they supported it all the way.

So for you it's not hard to sell these stories to your editor.

If the last one was good, I have an easy time. If the last one was bad, it's not so easy. I think, like any place, you're as good as your last story.

I've also heard many journalists saying that it's hard because they don't get enough space for their stories. How is the situation here?

I mean, I think there are some worries about how long stories are here. There've been efforts to take down the length of the average story – not necessarily narrative but the average story. But, you know, if you write something good enough, they're not going to cut it. Not every day, there are space limitations. But until I left on book leave, I was still writing somewhat longish pieces for the paper. And I guess when I come back from book leave, I'll do it again. So if it's good enough, they'll find room. If it's not good enough, they are trying to solve that problem: 'Can we shorten it? Can we make it better? Can we make it move faster?'

So in general, you'd say that this kind of writing is quite appreciated here.

Good versions of it, yes, there's a premium on it. It's desired and it's respected.

What kinds of readers' reactions do you get for those pieces?

Good, very good ones. Very personal. I get a lot of reactions, actually. And again, that's a thing to talk to Anne about. The reactions she gets are off the charge. There's something she does in here stories readers just love. So, yeah, I would talk to her.

Okay. We've been talking about the situation here. What is your view in general: Are newspapers still trying to use storytelling?

I don't know. That's why I would like to read your thesis. I think it is changing. Nobody wants to read a narrative downloaded onto their cell phone. They don't want to text a narrative. I don't know. The delivery system changes. It might have just been good timing for me. I know how to do one type of journalism well, can't do the other story well. So

maybe I just got a good break when I wanted to do this. But I think a lot of papers don't have room for it, don't have the resources for it. I mean, if you're going to expect a great narrative do be done in one day or two days, or maybe, in a rare case, you'll give a reporter three, four days to report and write, chances are it's not going to be a sustaining presence in this newspaper. You know what would be interesting to do? You should try to talk to a Pulitzer judge in the feature category and ask: 'What makes a good narrative and what makes a bad one?' Because they are seeing so many pieces… How many of them are about sick kids? How many of them are… I mean, these are all fine topics but to me, the great narratives are also the ones that surprise the reader.

So you think about the ones that don't tell the obvious.

Yes.

That's one thing I noticed because I looked at a lot of texts at the Nieman Narrative Digest, and many of them were about sick people or people who had some kind of horrible accident, stuff like that.

Listen. I love narrative when it's done well. When it feels like something that I might see on an afternoon talk show, then I don't like it. It diminishes it. Lots of sad stories are worth paying attention to. But if you're going to do it, do it in a really smart way. The point shouldn't be to just wait till you hear somebody crying. That's not all. Tell me something about this!

Another thing, here at the Washington Post, would you say there is a tendency that they are trying to get more narrative in the paper? Or is it less?

I don't know. I've been away this year. So I don't know what the paper is evolving into. I just feel that they continue to want it. And when it's done well, they give it prominence.

There are also people who say narrative writing could save newspapers. What's your idea of that?

Yes. No. No, I don't think it's going to save newspapers but my taste in journalism is such that if it weren't there, I'd miss it. But maybe what you're asking is: 'What are people looking for in newspapers any more?' By the time a paper publishes it, it's on the fifth or sixth site. But there's still an important percentage of the readership that gets its news from the newspaper. And maybe they haven't heard of it, and maybe they don't watch TV and maybe they don't look at the webpage of the Washington Post – fewer and fewer, I'm sure. So what is the newspaper going to offer? Probably great reporting, explanatory stuff, analysis, some features, investigative pieces. Things that don't make the reader feel like the newspaper is following what the newspaper already heard about but it's expanding what it has heard about. Does that make sense?

Yeah, of course. But do you think narrative writing is also there to entertain the reader?

It should catch your interest. I should do all the things that great storytelling does. Like: 'Yeah, that's an amazing story!' The best stuff transports the reader, it transports me. So I'm not sitting at my desk but suddenly, I'm in Bosnia, walking up a winding path full of mud and rain and the scent of freshly fallen leaves… This is John Burns story I'm talking about. And, you know, here are the bodies, there and there and there. Not just the bodies but the place, its light, its smell. So with all the things that happened to me that day, one last image stayed with me. And it was so powerfully transporting, it taught me something, it took me somewhere, it made me understand. Good goals. They still do that, great

pieces do that. They don't just inform. Information is fairly easy. But it's information that seizes you and twists you around a bit.

Okay. So I think that's it. Thank you.

Interview mit John Schwartz (*New York Times*) am 6. September 2007

First of all, could you tell me your exact position at the New York Times?

I'm a reporter.

And have you got any special beat?

I'm a science reporter, so I work with the science section. And as a science reporter, my beat is not very well defined. There are science reporters with very specific beats. People who know about medicine or physics – we have two people with advanced degrees in physics on the staff. One of them has recently moved on to be the Baghdad bureau chief but, you know, there are people with really specific skills. And then there are a couple like me. I don't have any actual skills and no actual training. I have nothing.

And since when have you been working for the New York Times?

I came to the Times in 2000. I had previously been at the Washington Post. And when I got here, I was hired as a technology writer in the technology section attached to the business section. Within a few years, I moved over to the science section.

OK. So my main topic is Narrative Journalism. And just to get this clear: How would you describe Narrative Journalism? What do you associate with it? What comes to mind when you hear the term?

Well, it's… I have no great insight. It's telling a story instead of just covering a story.

So that's the basic difference.

Right. I mean, there are lots of smartass answers I could give you, you know. Like when you're doing Narrative Journalism, you got to use adverbs. You know. But in fact, to me it's just being given the room and the latitude to tell a story in a more compelling way.

So that's what makes it different from other forms of journalism, for example news reporting?

Well, if you're doing a straight-forward news story, you're on deadline. There's no time for art. Some days, something happens, you gotta cover it, and you sit down and start the machine. And you do your calls and find your quotes and put it all together. It's a game of Tetris, and the pieces are coming down, and you're just assembling them as you go along. There's still room to make it good. But it's hard to come up with something on that kind of timeline that moves people.

So you think you need a lot of time to do this kind of narrative writing?

I have seen people do beautiful narratives very quickly but I need… If I'm gonna tell a story, I need a lot of time. For one thing, reporting is incredibly time-consuming, the kind of reporting that leads you to a story like the one with Artie. You know, I was seeing him for a year. And when I was with him, you know, we talked. And if you gonna do more than just get a sound-bite from somebody, each one is a real conversation. I mean, I know how to do a straightforward interview: sit down, have your set of questions, find out how much time you've got. But for the most part, my interviews wander. And that's where the best stuff comes from. So, it's time to report and time to write. Now, I've written lots of stuff on

deadline, I'm considered a fast guy. But if it's gonna be one of these long yarns, it just takes a while to get it right, to understand the structure and everything else.
Like a piece I did for the Washington Post in 1994 about a boy who spend so much of his time online that he fell asleep at the wheel of his car and died in the crash. His father decided that he would go online and warn all of his friends. He found his address book, he found where he went. So he went online to warn people, tell them about his son's death and say, you know: get a life. And what he found when he went online and started contacting people was that they had a life. They had a wonderful life online, it was very fulfilling, it was aesthetically interesting, they were telling each other stories. His father was a documentary filmmaker. And what he found was, in this environment, which was a kind of multi-player dimension game, his son was essentially creating art. And his friends were doing it with him, collaboratively. And his father realized that he and his son where not that much different, even though before he died, he had thought they were very different. And understanding that world and talking to the father took weeks and weeks. And writing it was very, very hard. So, yeah, it takes time.

You just said it takes time to create art. So would you say narrative is a kind of art?

No, I mean, art is a codeword. This is not art, this is craft. This is like making a very nice cabinet. I can make a cabinet quickly. I can make a table by taking four sticks and a plain but given time and I guess talent, since I'm actually terrible with working, but you know, with time and talent, you can actually make something… It's still craftwork.
I got no pretensions about what I do. There are also many people who talk about journalism as a profession. It's not a profession, I'm not a professional. I don't have a credential, you know. I've got something I do pretty well and I'm lucky enough to have a job where they let me do it. But my father is a lawyer, he's a professional. And my younger brother is a doctor, he's a professional. My older brother is a lawyer. They are professionals. They had to pass a certification. They were only allowed to do their jobs after being licensed, you know. This is a very different thing. It's a craft. It's a really good one.

What do you think, what kind of function can Narrative Journalism obtain in the newsroom? Why would you use it?

Well, if it was all straight news, the newspaper would be very dull. It would tell you things that you need to know but you would rarely find something that you were glad you read.

So this is the main purpose, giving people something they like to read?

Or something they need to read. Something they … I mean, my story about Artie, it wasn't simply there to entertain the reader. By reading that story, my hope was people would come away saying: 'Look, this city has a chance, on the backs of people like this'. And it's not all… You know, the mean that was going around was that New Orleans is a lost city, a hopeless city, you know, and corrupt. And by focusing on the struggle of one person, I thought I could tell a broader story about where the hope is in New Orleans.

So it has some kind of deeper meaning, it was not just the story.

Yeah. I mean there are stories you tell just because they are amazing and you just can't help yourself. And I know people who tell stories like that. But how much better is it to have a story that you can tell honestly, that has a point, that has a direction, a meaning. So if you're lucky, you'll get all of that.

What do you think, what kinds of topics lend themselves for a narrative approach?

Anytime you can find a person and follow that person, that's the most natural. And then of course, there a people, great journalists, who create a character from a place or thing. My buddy Steve Tumey of the Washington Post, when he was at, I think, the Philadelphia Inquirer, won the Pulitzer Prize for his series about life on board of a aircraft carrier. And he really, you know, his character was the plane.

That's impressive.

Yeah, it was a beautiful thing that he did. But I need people.

Okay. You know, I looked at quite some texts at the Nieman Narrative Digest and I found that many of them focus on some kind of tragedy, people struggling with illness or storms, catastrophes, stuff like that. Do you think that's…?

Well, that's what news focuses on. I mean, a lot of the news business is the bad news business. But take the Artie story again: It's a good news story. It's finding an uplifting story to tell in a terrible situation. So it's not all about doom and gloom. But tragedy holds our attention.
You know, another narrative piece I did, I followed the problems of Rodney Rocha who was an engineer at NASA during the mission of the shuttle Columbia. He fought and fought and fought to try to get NASA to pay attention to this impact with foam that was easily detectable, visible on video. But you couldn't say what the damage was. And he said: 'Let's look at it. Let's use spy satellites, let's use telescopes on the ground, let's do a spacewalk, let's look at it.' And he was rebuffed at least three times, possibly more, over the course of the mission – and then everyone died. There was an eight-by-ten inch hole on the wing. And Rodney, Rodney's story was a way to tell what went wrong with NASA. But Rodney's story was also very much about what was right with NASA. There were still people like that. So, I don't … I mean, they often come off of tragedy because that's compelling but they don't all have to be tragic stories.

How do you find these stories? How do you go about to find these people?

Well, Artie, I was driving through New Orleans, it was December, I had just been to a thing about one of the canals, a couple of engineers were there, and they had this little, you know, whatever, presentation at the canal. As I was driving along, I sort of wandered through the neighborhood and saw there was a guy working inside the house. And there weren't many people working in December, so I knocked on his door.

So it was…

Yeah, it was just by chance. Other people, I mean, you find them where you find anyone, right. Sometimes a person is standing outside of his house, other times, they come to your attention like Rodney. I kept hearing about him while I was investigating the Columbia disaster. People said: 'Oh, Rodney was the guy standing up.' I kept hearing about him. And he wouldn't talk to me until the Columbia accident investigation report was coming out. And, like, I worked on him, I got to know him. But, you know, he was a known guy, he was the guy who spoke up. Other times, people present themselves to me, or I'd see somebody write a letter to the editor of a newspaper and realize that person had a story to tell that's not going to show up in the newspaper. And I called him up. That's happened a few times, when you find somebody who expressed an opinion in the newspaper. Again with Columbia, a couple of weeks before the investigation report was published, a guy wrote a letter to the L.A. Times and said: 'Everybody's criticizing the creative program that was used to judge the damage that the piece of foam would do. Well, I wrote the creative program and let me tell you, the program did not fail. The people who used it failed. The program, when used properly, would have detected tremendous damage.` He had an

interesting name, one you could google up, and I found him, and he talked to me for an hour or so, and I wrote a story that appeared a day before the report was released. And the guy from the L.A. Times was there when the report was released and he said: 'Nice story'... Bird nesting on the ground, I mean, come on, buddy! You could have called him. But he had written to complain about a story in the L.A. Times that said the program was a poor guide. So it was my turn to get that accurate. I love that. I'm a little competitive.

I see. But I guess you have to be.

I mean, it doesn't do you any good to be third. But that doesn't mean you cannot ever follow someone. I mean, the Rodney story I wrote several months after he had appeared on television. He had agreed to speak on television about his experiences. And I was actually able to go to him and say: 'You know, you really got used badly in that television program.' Because they made him sound like a Hamlet figure, one who thought and thought and thought, and never really stood up and then gave up. And in fact, it's clear from my research that he had never given up, that he had been shut down. And he deserved ... I mean, they held him up almost to ridicule him on that television program. So I didn't mind putting him in the paper after he had been on TV and nobody else seemed to mind either, if you tell the story well.

Well, you already talked about reporting and how it takes more time. What I found interesting in the Artie story was that you hadn't observed all the stuff you were telling there. There were some things you had to reconstruct. And I'm interested in this reconstruction because there are a whole lot of discussions going on about how one can tell if this is the way it happened. What do you think about that?

This guy [Artie, Anm. d. Verf.] doesn't lie. I mean, there are unreliable narratives. But this is a guy who, like a lot of people in New Orleans, has many characteristics: He is a Kennedy assassination conspiracy theorist, he tells funny stories about the mob influence in the city of New Orleans but about his personal life – he never blinked. I mean, you would say: 'You and Tonja, are you married?' 'No'. 'But you got a daughter.' 'Yeah.' 'And your son?' 'First marriage.' 'And your daughter?' 'That's her daughter.' I mean, he would very manner-of-factly describe things that many people would find embarrassing or try to cover up. But in fact, he was unbelievingly open. So I felt comfortable reporting what he said. But I also was very careful to say that this is his recollection.

Yeah, that's what I noticed, that you always said 'he recalls' or something like that, or that you used his quotes. I mean, some journalists just tell it as if they had been there.

You can't do that. If it's in your voice, you gotta be able to prove it. You know, in the very first story I did at New Orleans, I arrived a day after they had first gotten one of the major pumps working again. And that was a on deadline semi-narrative, I mean it comes close to being a narrative, it was about the process of getting these pumps started again. And I was there the second day. To get the very best story, you would want to describe the very first time it started up but in fact, I was there the second day. So I described that and said that it had started the day before, you know. And I described the process of getting there the day before. But if you're lying about something like that...

So you think it's a question of being honest to the reader?

Yeah. I mean, why would they trust you the next time? And remember: I worked with Jayson Blair. It's not like this is theoretical or hypothetical for me.

So you are really aware of this.

Yes. I mean, when people complain to me about stories, they still throw Jayson Blair at my face, today. So it's not like this is some kind of prissy choice I make.
You know, this building, this space. One of the things that Renzo Piano said in developing the architectural drawing and selling it was that a large glass building like this, with floor-to-ceiling windows and light, evokes the transparency that is the metaphorical basis of any newsgathering organization. And this, to me, is bullshit. I mean, this is what architects say to make the sale. I mean, pretty windows, I like looking out of windows, that's fun. But having said all of that, I mean, you really want transparency. And if you don't do your work with integrity, then it is worthless.

We've already talked about the reporting. So let's talk about the writing process. Is there any special way you try to structure your stories?

I got no system. Pieces come down, it's Tetris. You try to figure out how to sort them. Even with a long piece I will try to structure an outline before I go very far but in fact, the outline is always a work in progress. You make the basic decision in the beginning if this is going to be a tick-tock, a time-based narrative, or if you gonna do it by themes. Once you'd made that choice, other choices follow. But it's not systematic, you know. And I do feel that if I understood better how it worked, I wouldn't be able to do it all that well. So I try not to think about it too much. I sit down and I work.
You know, when I worked at Newsweek, I had my first big assignment, a lead on the nation's section, which was gonna be nine columns, a pretty big story. And I said to the deputy editor who was my age and a friend: 'You know, I don't mind telling you, I'm really intimidated. I don't know if I'm getting this done'. She sent back a note, instant message of the day. It said: 'You just start working and you keep working till it's done. That's all there is to it. No mystery.' That's the whole message. I could give you the punctuation because it is floating in front of my eyes. What a liberating thing that was. Just start working and keep working until it's done. That's all there is to it. No mystery. And I wrote the damned story. And then I printed out the message and taped it to my computer monitor. And whenever I get stuck, I look at it again. It's like the magic feather in Dumbo. It gets you going.

What role does language play in the writing process? I noticed in your texts quite a figurative language. I mean you use metaphors and all that. Do you pay close attention to that or does that just pop up?

What I do is I do pay attention to it, I try to – again, not in a systematic way – but I go over these pieces…. I do the first draft, I let it sit over night, and then I look at it the next morning and sometimes I wake up with a better phrase and sometimes … And I just keep going over it until better terms or phrases present themselves. That's another thing why it takes so much time. As rereading it, little things will surprise you, little ideas. It's rare that this comes up in the first run-through. That's what I'm trying to do, I try to surprise myself. I leave time to be able to surprise myself. But it's not like I go in and say: 'I need 20 words of five syllables'. And often I look things up and think: 'That's too flowery'. Because I do have a tendency to get … I like to balance plain speaking with highfalutin or almost pretentious speaking. I like to put them together when it's possible. Those combinations, I look them up on my second or third run-through, you know. But most of the times, I go through it and I look them up and I'd say: 'Nobody is gonna go for that'. So you take it out and you edit it … Because it's too pretentious. Well, I'm writing for a pretty well-educated audience but I don't want to remind them all the time that they are pretty well-educated. I don't want to send them looking for a dictionary. The book that's best …. There is a great teacher for writing who is a retired professor at the University of Texas, named John Trimble, and he wrote a book called 'Writing with Style' and I took John's course at the University of Texas in 1979 or 1980 and it was just about life-changing. It's just the kind of thing that makes you … And his book 'Writing with Style' says everything he has to say.

But he warns against nearly adequate writing. When he was editing our papers, he would just write 'n. a.' at the margin, which was to say: 'Couldn't you put a little more effort onto this? This seems just blah.' And when I got to Newsweek, one of the editors would put in the editing note he was writing 'say better pls', you know, very cablese, very correspondent-cablese. But, I mean, what a crappy thing to say. It's not giving you directions. This is telling you 'This is unclear' and its up to you to figure out how it's getting better, it's not telling you what he wants, he's just telling you that he doesn't like what he sees. Well, that's just like John Trimble and his 'n.a.' This is nearly adequate, this is unclear, you can do better…. I don't know how I got on that. Go ahead.

No, we'll get back to this whole editor-reporter relationship, so it's alright. Another thing I'd like to talk about is the narrative voice or the personal voice that comes into these kinds of texts. How important is that for you?

I try whenever possible, I mean, a huge amount of Narrative Journalism today, many, many stories start with the word 'I', and I feel that any story that begins with the word 'I' needs to be rewritten. Because if it starts with you, it's not about whatever it is you're writing about. And if it is about you, are you really interesting enough for someone to spend his time with it? I mean, why does a story about a movie star start with 'I', or a lead start with 'I'? I think that the Times is a little too fuzzy in removing it to a huge extent. So you find yourself going backwards to say 'said to a visiting reporter' or 'said to a reporter' when it's clear he's talking to you. And I do pieces that start from the first person more often than a lot of people here but rarely could you rise to the prominence in a piece that you should begin it. Why are you writing about something else? If you're so damned interesting, why are you going somewhere else to write about it? If that's so damned interesting, why are you in it? The observations are important but they are gonna come through in the writing.

But isn't it a bit awkward to write something like 'he said to a reporter for the New York Times' even though everybody knows it's you?

It's a convention that I don't like but I prefer it to the 'I did this' and 'I did this' and 'this is how I felt about the unspeakable tragedy of Katrina'. No! No! I don't care what you felt. I wanna know what you saw. And what you felt will come through. You know, if you lost your shoe and your back hurts… And you see this reflexive 'I', all the magazines do it. And it can be a topic about anything and the writer is front and center. It's so useless. So I'd rather be a little awkward than self-aggrandizing, okay. And if there's a way to simply say 'I', then I do it. That's fine, too, you know.

But, I mean, even if you don't use the 'I' in the text, there's still… I mean, you comment on things and it's still written from your point of view.

Oh, I'm there. I mean, I'm not going to withdraw because, you know, it's my eyes. Another person might see Artie in a totally different way. They might decide he's a buffoon. Whereas I see him as a great blend of hero and buffoon. So, as a narrator, you're important. But your contribution is in the interpretation and I feel that you can do that with a sense of authority in your writing without saying 'and I say' and 'I am John Schwartz and I say'. I don't care what John Schwartz says, but I'm interested in the way he sees it. I just don't want to hear that out of his mouth, you know. Does that make sense?

Yeah, I see what you mean.

I don't want him drawing attention away from the things. But his perceptions should inform the story. He's not cold and dry and remote. And so I will … I did a little story about a movie about the Apollo astronauts. It was in yesterday's paper. And I said in this story… I

talked about a sort of lump-in-the-throat moment in the film. As a critical statement, not as critical as in criticizing but as I'm clearly saying that John Schwartz was deeply moved at this moment in the film. I wouldn't say 'A reporter who sat at the screening was moved' but 'It was moving'. Because many people would be moved and I have the authority to say that. I have permission to say that. I'm not a reviewer. I'm not going to say this movie succeeds or this movie fails or this movie is great. I can say that when I see a shuttle launch, I can say that that shakes the air and makes the heart beat or whatever bullshit I'd say but, you know, whatever I say is … I see this thing and I write down how it feels to me and then I say 'I'm the reader's representative at the launch' and so I say what it felt like to me and it might not mean… It certainly wouldn't feel the same to my wife who doesn't like the space program and thinks the money would be better spent on earth. So, she is not as likely to be moved by seeing seven million pounds of thrust sending this enormous thing into space. But to me, this is thrilling, and I try to get that across. And I don't say 'Johnny Schwartz saw it and said it was thrilling' and I don't say 'I was moved'. You have permission to say 'It's moving', 'It's thrilling'. It puts your heart in your throat. So these distinctions you're making are not very important to me, you know, because there's always a way to get across how you felt.

Okay. So would you say this is a difference between narrative writing and regular news-writing?

I think you could put narrative elements into any story. My shuttle launches are straightforward news stories with narrative touches. I describe what it looked like, what the day was like. I describe the fact that,when the rockets go, the birds come up from the nature reserve that surrounds Kennedy Space Center and fly everywhere. And that an hour after the launch at dusk the vapor trail, the smoke trail form the rocket just hangs in the sky. All those are narrative touches. It's a simple, straightforward news story but you could still say 'this was beautiful'. There's not really a distinction … I think that's one of the reasons why I think these guys like what I do. Is that Arthur [Ochs Sulzberger Jr., Anmerk. d. Verf.]? I can't tell.

Neither can I.

Well, it's his building. But, you know, nobody requires me to write, you know, this is story form A and this is story form B and you can't blend them. What they seem to like about me is that even in a straight news story I can add a line or an element that gives you that immediacy. And then, occasionally, they let me do something fun.

That's basically leading to my next question about the attitude here in the newsroom towards narrative writing or narrative touches. How is it perceived here?

There is a note of caution against self-indulgence, you know. But nobody wants the stories to feel like they could have been written fifty years ago, nobody wants dry reporting. You know, it's not transcription. I was hired to do a little of both. There are times when they want a straightforward piece and there are times when they want something with more drama – and you talk with your editor, you know, 'where do you see this one?', especially on the longer stories. The fact is, longer stories are an endangered species in all kinds of American journalism because our papers are getting smaller and we have fewer ads and the stories have to shrink. And so the idea that on my last story on New Orleans I got 1,900 words is fabulous. And I played it with everything I got. The fact that I was able to get 2,500 words for Artie and 3,500 words for Rodney Rocha, I mean, that's wonderful. But this is gonna happen less and less.

So you think this is changing?

Oh, it's in the midst of changing. Your editors will remind you constantly that this story could be 600, this story could be 800, that this story is 1,100, why isn't it 900? And you have to come up with a different way, you know. The paper is physically smaller. So you have to figure out: 'Can I tell this in a shorter way?' And you can hiss and moan about that and go and start your own newspaper. Good luck to you! Or you can look at the institution you come to work for and say 'Okay, I'm gonna be here, given what I'm allowed to do, given what is open to me here, I think I can write the stories a little shorter, for Christ's sake'.

You try to adapt to it.

Exactly. If it's not gonna blow out real big, I'll try to write it shorter – and I'll do that. And frankly, a 600-word-story, what a joy! You can write a 600-word-story in an hour.

And then go home early…

You never go home early. I was up till 1.30 in the morning finishing a story for the technology section. And it was the second night this week that I'd been up like that. Last Thursday, I was up till 3.20 in the morning to finish a piece for the arts section. You know, when I come home I sit down and do more work – sometimes.

But does this whole… I mean, everything has gotten smaller, you have less space – does that also apply to the time you get for doing your stories?

Luckily no. I mean, some stories have to be written that day, that's it. It happens, it needs to be in tomorrow's paper – tick-tock. But with planning, you can get it all done.

So you get the time. You can say: 'I have to talk to this person over the course of a year' and it's okay?

Right. Two months ago, no three months ago, I went to one of the editors of the Science Times section and said 'you know that in October it's the 50th anniversary of Sputnik, right'. And he goes 'damn, yes, that's right'. And we have been talking about that we could devote the entire Science Times section to it. So we started planning out those pieces months ago. And I got a piece that… you know, most of what I'll do after you go today is reporting this piece about, you know, my piece of it. And the other pieces were assigned and, you know, I'm working with web people… Remember, now it's not only the newspaper, I'm working with the web people and I'm working with the video people and I'm writing my little one-minute-podcast… but that's why you plan. And you plan with enough room that if five daily news stories come up that you have to cover, then you do those, too.

You have to manage to do both, basically.

Yeah. Like yesterday, I was mentioning this to the classical music reporter we just met, he was like 'Where had you been?'. End of last week, I called one of the public affairs' guys at NASA and I said 'Mike Griffin would be a great person to talk to for this story' and he said 'I agree' and I said 'If we could do this, it would be great for this story, so do I get to see him?' and he said 'Yes, I think we could work that out'. Great. I would travel for that, I would rather see him face-to-face instead of… and a day before yesterday he called me in the afternoon and said 'hey, how about tomorrow?'. And I went to my boss and said 'you want me to go face-to-face?' and he said 'it would be better'. Wow. First of all, in an age when newspapers are failing and cutting back on all kinds of coverage he says 'Go spend several hundred dollars on a thirty-minute-interview, but get face-to-face so it's better.

Make it better.' So, I've been planning the thing for months but some things come up. And we are able to do quick things… Two weeks ago, I was driving my daughter to Michigan to drop her off at college, no it was last week. And as I was doing the drive, I got a call from the public relations person for the lawyer who represents Lisa Nowak, that love sick astronaut, and she said 'we're doing a filing'. So I said 'tell me about it' and I called the national editor who's been pushing me to cover this and he said 'that's great, I wish you could do it' and I said 'well, I'm driving, it's a ten-hour-drive'. And then I pulled over to the side of the road, put my Cingular card into my laptop and sent him an e-mail and said 'As you can see, I can file. I'm gonna be getting the filing and I'm gonna be getting the papers online anyway. So if you want it, I can do it'. And he said 'alright'. So I did a couple of interviews, I pulled over again to do the interviews, stopped at Mc Donald's along the way and it added two hours to the drive. But I was able to do my reporting and to ship the story. It was three in the morning on Sunday. I did most of the interviews stopping on Interstate 80….

Okay. So here at the New York Times, you still feel like you have the financial resources and the time to do the kind of reporting you need for your stories?

Unlike just about every other place I hear about, yes. I'm very, very lucky here. And yes, I am asked to consider the costs of things more than used to be in the past. But if it's important, nobody says no. I've been asked 'Do you really need to live in Houston during every shuttle mission, covering every day from Houston?'. And I say: 'If nothing terrible is going on, I could cover it from here. You know, if nothing terrible is going on, we could save that money.' But if I get a hint that something's wrong, I'm on a plane and they say 'of course'. We're still on Iraq. We still have an enormous bureau in Iraq. Armored cars that cost I think hundreds of thousands of dollars – and I think we have three of them, though you would have to check that. The fact is that guy – if that was Arthur but I think it was – that guy understands that if you don't spend the money, the coverage isn't any good. But you don't spend it stupidly. And if somebody asks me 'Can't you eat at less expensive places, can you keep the food expenses down, can you travel this way instead of that way?', then I'm strongly gonna consider it, sure. I just decided yesterday that I'm not gonna ride the Acela train any more, I'm just gonna ride regionals. That saves more than a hundred dollars and I ended up on a regional train yesterday instead of the Acela and it was fine. And I thought: 'Why am I spending Arthur's money that way?' Okay, I'm sorry, I'm rambling…

No, no. Just one more question about the relationship between editors and reporters. Is it hard for you to sell longer narrative texts, or narrative texts in general?

They want a blend. They want to weigh in with the big ones, too. They want a mix of long and short and they ask for projects. Now, if I came up and said 'I only wanna do long projects', you know, 'My excellence requires that I only do this thing and it should all start on the front page', then no, they gonna get tired of you because you're a prima donna. But they don't want somebody, as a baseball metaphor goes, to sit in a bunch of singles. You gotta swing.

What about readers' reactions to your storytelling pieces?

Well, if it's a prominent piece, you get more mail. And since the advent of … It's now possible to simply click on my byline and send me an e-mail as opposed to finding my e-mail-address on the site. There's actually qualitative difference in the e-mail I get. The click-people, a lot of them are just morons. You know, the Artie piece, some of the people just clicked and wrote 'The city is a goner anyway; they're all just a bunch of corrupt idiots, why should we support them'. I get this a lot whenever I do a New Orleans story but that one especially. And one person wrote, you know, 'How wonderful for this adulterer and his

bastard daughter that you got to write a nice story about them'. And I wrote him back and said 'What an act of Christian charity you're showing, with this man, going through something I hope you never have to go through, and all you see is the moral choices he's making. He's a great father to that girl. He's a loving father to that girl.' I don't know why I responded, it was utterly unnecessary but I was stunned. But you get that a lot. The click-writers will say, you know, 'If you weren't such a stupid radical liberal you would understand that government is the problem, not the solution'. This sort of polarization of American politics reaches even into stories that have not an ounce of political intent.

And do you also get some positive reactions?

Oh yes. Great, great stuff. Even more important than what I got – because I got a couple of dozen very nice things like 'Thank you for telling this story', 'Thank you for focusing on this uplifting story' – Artie got letters and cards because, you know, what was the lead: 'It no longer stinks at 7023 Fleur de Lys.' His address is in the story. He starts getting mail. People send toys to his daughter. And little inspirational cards, you know, 'thank you for sharing your story'. And that's really good. I did a series of three pieces after 9/11 on a law firm that had its offices in the higher floors of one of the World Trade Center buildings. And the building, of course, was gone, the offices were gone, the people were all saved except for one partially disabled woman. They got her down the stairs but she collapsed, something happened, she didn't get away from the building far enough. They lost that one person. And the stories were very emotionally wrenching to do. I mean, if you're working on one of these narrative pieces and you find that you're crying while you're writing it, that's a good sign.

Does that happen to you?

Oh yeah, of course. And then people tell me they were crying. So there's a connection with the reader, you're somehow putting it in there. And I don't know how that works and I don't want to know. But when you were crying, they were crying. It's just an amazing thing. People tell you this, so you know it happens. The first of theses stories really focused on one guy named John who was basically in charge of, you know, he was a office manager kind of guy. And he made sure the five floors were cleared and he listed two guys to help him get staff out and the guy was very matter-of-fact and also developing his way and there were things that he told me in an hour-long phone conversation where he would start telling me and he would cry. The PR guy of the law firm was also on the phone and he said 'Maybe we should stop now'. And I'd say 'I'd really rather not, if that's okay. What do you think, John?'. And John would say: 'No, I wanna go on, I wanna keep talking.' So I wrote the story. He did things, like at one point he was really breaking down, he was saying: 'And then I go to the kitchen and I clear up the kitchen and I see somebody has left the burner on. So I turned of the burner because I didn't want there to be a fire.' And he left. And when he left, he lost it. The pieces were very good pieces. And the next time I talked to him, he said: 'You wanna see the letter I got from the President?'

Because of your text?

How else was anybody gonna know about it? And so, how we got to that was, I think, you said the connection with the reader, right? A lot of people read it. And you like that. So, yeah, sometimes there is positive response.

Okay, we're almost there, just a couple more questions. There's some talk about that there is some kind of renaissance of narrative writing in newspapers. Would you agree with that?

I mean, I don't know. I don't know the broad sweep, you know. Talk to the Columbia Journalism Review about that. I'm just making a living, I don't know.
And what about here at the New York Times?

It's always been, as long as I've been, here it's been a paper that values writing. If there's more going on, if there is in fact a renaissance of it, you know, I think it's the sort of thing that comes and goes. And they have writers who they look to for that kind of thing, the sort of Rick Bragg touch. I mean, we had Rick Bragg and these people, and they were the artists, you know. But I don't know. That's a very theoretical question, I'm not comfortable with it. I just don't know.

Oh, that's just fine.

They like what I do and I get a paycheck every week.

But could you say if there are more or less narrative texts here?

No, but they clearly value it. I don't know about the broad sweep over time. If you read a New York Times from the 1950s, no, there's not a lot of that narrative, though there were always occasional stories that stood out and were gripping and well told. So this has always had a home here. But I just don't know. I'm not a scholar at the Times and I'm not a journalism professor, I just know what I do.

Just one last question about the future of this kind of writing: Where do you see its future, considering the internet?

Well, if newspapers have a future, this kind of writing will have a future within newspapers.

But do you think newspapers have a future?

You know, not as newspapers of fifteen years ago. As I said, now when I do something, I have to do the video and I have to provide the web links and maybe I'll do a podcast. And all these things will draw people to the website because that's where we have more readers than in print. And at some point, an actual newspaper on paper might be a vanity publication, that only a few people would pay a exurban amount of money to get. Like in Neal Stephenson's *Diamond Age* where these Neo-Victorians get newspapers and it's just paper and it's intentionally archaic because that's what they do within a highly technologically evolved society. You know… But the paper, think of all the money we would save. I have a life to pay for. So I don't know how these things work out because I'm not on the business side. But I tell you, institutions rarely collapse. Media rarely collapse, they change, they rarely collapse. I still have a radio in my car. Television killed radio. I listen to radio. And I listen to stupid talk radio people and I listen to NPR and I listen to 'Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me' and I'm entertained and informed. Radio is dead.

But it's still there.

Yeah, it's still there. It's been destroyed by conglomerate ownership and it's been destroyed by this and by that. My first job in big journalism was at Newsweek. Newsweeklies are dead. Everybody knows newsweeklies are dead. After I left and got to the Washington Post who had, fifteen years before I left Newsweek, written a letter, a memo to the owner of the Washington Post company saying 'you really ought to get rid of Newsweek because newsweeklies are dead'. Everybody knows that. But look on the newsstand – they are still there. They're thinner; they changed what they do because they know what they know: Nobody wants the chitchat at the end of the week information any

more. But they're still there. So, yeah, newspapers survive, we just don't know what they gonna look like.

There are some people who say: 'Well, narrative is the remedy to save newspapers'. What's your opinion on that?

It could be. It's one of the things that could. But giving people news that they need is also really important. You know, the thing that made newspapers work a hundred years ago or fifty years ago are still important for the future of newspapers, too. It's not that the whole newspaper has to be like this. If the newspaper is a cafeteria line, there are gonna be some surprises in that, there're gonna be some things you gotta read, and some things you're glad you read. And if you provide that every day, something that you have to have read, something that you need to have read, something that you're really glad you stumbled upon, then people will keep coming. And if they get to it through the internet or through a newsstand, you know. Yeah, I want the money worked out, I want to still have a job but I don't care if it's on paper or if it's on a screen. It would be nice if the part on the screen brought in the same kind of money as the part on the print does. And that's a technical and marketing problem to be worked on. And those are decisions made above my pay rate. But you get loads of people saying 'You gotta read this'. And sometimes it's news, and sometimes it's a feature. I mean, we're telling each other about this all the time. Anyway, I think there's a future and I don't see collapse. And if I'm wrong, then I'm out of a job and my children will starve. It's okay…

Well, okay. Thank you.

Interview mit Erika Hayasaki (*Los Angeles Times*) am 9. September 2007

Maybe you could first tell me your exact position at the L.A. Times and since when you've been working there.

Yeah. I'm the New York correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, so I'm an actual correspondent. I cover New York, obviously, but I also cover the North East, so I write about Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New England, all those areas. But I've only been doing this for about seven months. And before that, I was in Los Angeles for about eight years, I guess, most of the time covering education, youth issues, doing a bit of narrative.

My focus is on Narrative Journalism. How would you describe this kind of journalism?

Narrative Journalism is storytelling and really developing the character of the people that you interview, getting inside the minds of the people you interview. So you get stories readers identify with. Narrative usually has, should have a story line, so there's an arc. And the story has a beginning, middle and end, and is complex. All these kinds of elements that you find in literature, in novels – well, not novels but short stories, I guess, you have all these things integrated into narrative. So it's pulling the reader in along with your story. And you develop a theme and that's how your story moves along.

So you'd say that all these things make it different from other forms, for example news reporting?

Yeah, in news reporting you generally have the lead of the story, the nut graph, all the facts that you have reported. And then you put a lot of quotes in there, and maybe a little scene. But narrative is also very focused on, you know, less people – one or two main characters, a couple of others.

What do you think, what kind of function can Narrative Journalism fulfill in newspapers?

What kind of function?

I mean, what is its aim? Why do you think is it in the newspaper?

I think that, for me, you know, I'm speaking for myself now, reading a newspaper, you get the news, you get really great stories, investigative stories, things like that. What newspapers can provide is in-depth, investigative pieces, pieces that really look at issues, or narrative – as opposed to online media or television that are all about fast news. Now, narrative can go into a process where you had a two-minute broadcast or an eight inch story in your paper without a name and you can go back to it and really tell the story and connect with the readers, to the point where readers are crying, or they're angry, or they, you know, they're feeling what actually happened in the story. And that's actually important to all of us as human beings, that we feel something.

So you think Narrative Journalism should evoke some emotions in the reader?

Yeah. You wanna make your readers feel. Instead of just like reading a report, in narrative, you want them to feel what things felt like, you know, what the room looked like, what went through her head when she found out her father had shot her. You know, all these things, you want the people who are reading this to feel, to connect to the story and tell more than… I guess what my mentor told me is, you know, not everything is gonna change the world but you're dealing with humanity, a little bit. And that's what narrative

does. Give us a slice of life and show how we live. How we live through struggle and how we live through joy and how we live through catastrophes that go on in the world. All these things about how people live. And other people wanna read that. When a narrative runs, it's incredible how many responses you get that you wouldn't have if you had the 20 inch story about a girl like 'Girl Gets Shot in the Head and Lives' and, you know, end of story. But with a real story, people correspond, people feel it. And it's important for newspapers because, you know, the readership for newspapers is really on the decline. I mean, people are reading their news online, newspapers lose circulation, they can't figure out how to balance the online thing. Everybody's working on it, we're working on it, but you have to be different than TV and breaking news online. The content that we will have to provide has to be really different and people have to want to read it and I think narrative is one element but there are also others. I mean, all the things we have to do really well and different. Narrative is one element, you know, and people want to read it. They wanna read through a story, they want to feel, they want to know the story behind the story.

And all those readers' responses make you feel that readers want to read these longer stories?

I know they do. Now, longer is debatable. But they want to read stories, yes. They want to read really good stories. I believe that, I totally believe that.

What makes you believe that?

Because of the way people respond when you write a story. I will give you sort of an example, I guess. I wrote a story – now that I'm a national correspondent, I have to do narrative in a different way, you can't spend necessarily all the time on a story, so you learn how to do shorter narrative. I mean, I'm constantly traveling and breaking news. So, when Virginia Tech happened, all the media in the world was there, covering every bit of the story. But there were some kids in one of the classrooms – one of the classrooms where most of the people died. And only one person walked out alive. Anyway, I wanted to write the story of that classroom. And it wasn't kind of that I… I didn't have a main character, I sort of focused a bit on the teacher but it was more … I sort of did it in a narrative form, using narrative tricks. It was the story of that classroom, of that teacher, how the kids came together around the teacher, and the horror that they went trough. And in the end, the ones that survived went to the teacher's funeral and kind of found their bond. The story ran like a week after the Virginia Tech and everybody had already gotten off and I was one of the last reporters there because I wanted to get this story. And everybody else was like 'Okay, we've done this story, we're over it, we're gonna leave'. And I watched everybody drive off and I was still there, wanting to get the story, wanting to interview everybody who was in the classroom. And it was incredible, the response I got for that story. I mean, it had so many hits on the internet, it was like one of the top-five stories on the internet that month on our site. Everybody thought like, 'This is too late, we had this the next day'. But it wouldn't have been possible to get this story the next day, me being alone. But people, they cried, they felt they knew the people in the story. They told me that: 'I felt like I knew these people'.
You know, there was a man who died… That was a story that ran early, when I first got here to New York, about a man dying alone in front of his television and nobody found him for a year. So he died… And everybody was like 'How weird is that'. And they found him and his television was still on. So, basically, he sat in front of a television dead for a year, and nobody ever thought to check on him. So the papers ran stories about how weird that is. And I went back and did this story about his caretaker, the last person who saw him, a kind of narrative about that. And again, the response was just incredible, more than you ever gonna get from a routine piece.

What kind of topics lend themselves to a narrative approach?

What kind of topics? I think that… Oh, that's a good question. There are a lot of topics, I guess. But you have to have some kind of storyline, I guess. You have to see things change. You have to see characters change.

So there has to be a development?

There has to be a development, a change. One way to do that would be to follow somebody's day, start out with their day. You know, I did this story about a kid walking to school and he went through, every day he went to school, was this game of life or death. Every choice he made, was a choice about life or death. So one day, I went to school with him and spent the entire day with him. So I got up, met him at his house at five in the morning, watched him and his family, walked to school with him and talked with him about why he was making this choice, to take this round, instead of this choice. Why he was taking this staircase instead of this staircase. And every choice he made, he made for a reason. You know, for safety. Literally, he could get shot. He had friends who had gotten shot because they took the wrong way. By the end of the day… The question of the story – narratives have a question – was 'Will he make it home okay?' or 'Will he survive the ordeal?' You know, some sort of question that you begin with, that you're searching for. And so at the end of the day the question that I built that story around – and that's just one day, not a drawn-out, long project, was 'Will he make it home okay?'. You know, this day. And he did. But the drama of that journey in one day of his life was incredible. So I guess the topics have to, you have to think that out. You have to think before you write your story.

Quite a lot of the stories on the Nieman Narrative Digest dealt with some kind of accident or catastrophes. Are those the obvious choices?

It's easy – no, it's not easy but there's the instant drama. The instant emotion that you could feel. Like life or death. Yeah, those stories lend themselves for narratives. But, I mean, I did a story about a girl going off to college and her father struggling with it…

Yes, I read that one…

Oh, was that on there? But that was not about life or death. It was the father letting go of the daughter, you know. That was another one where the response was like amazing, who would have thought, a story about a girl going to college – and it could have been any girl – just because they kind of, they really let me in, to the point when I would be with them when he was saying goodbye to her. You know, people connected with that. And so, this doesn't have to be about life or death. You have to think creatively, think about really what human themes are. A father letting go of his daughter, friends growing up together, growing apart, love, love in the middle of a crazy, horrible situation. All these human themes that we all feel and we're all connected to no matter who we are. When you try it, it's really not that difficult. You just have to think about your story. And that will strike a chord with your readers, that will make them feel.

The next couple of questions are about the process of reporting. You've already mentioned that people really have to let you in. Could you describe the way you report these kinds of stories, how much time it takes and all that?

Every story is different. Sometimes, you work a year on a story. I have done that, working a year on a story, but the reality in the newspaper world is that not all of us have this kind of luxury. But every story is different. With this family, I spent a couple of weeks, popping in and out of their lives – the girl who went to college. With the Virginia Tech piece I spent

four days just trying to interview everybody. But getting in, I guess, is what narrative journalist people do. It's kind of hard for conference journalists. And I live in both worlds all the time with my job. And there are journalists who, I think – I know – are comfortable sitting behind a desk or interviewing the professionals, you know, the mayor or whoever, going to press conferences. And they're really good at doing this. But for stories, you know, doing narrative is a whole other level of intimacy. You have to step really out of your office and walk into people's lives and make them comfortable with this and make them tell you everything that they were thinking and let them be there. It's amazing what people let you in on. The way you do that is I think some people kind of have it naturally. I don't know. I think I really do want to know about the people I'm writing about. I really care a lot about the people that I write about. I feel for them, I feel what I want my readers to feel.

And that's why people open up to you?

I think they sense that, a lot of times. I'm like not faking interest. I'm not playing.

But isn't it kind of difficult when you get that close and people maybe tell you something and maybe later they think 'oh, I don't really want to read that in the newspaper'?

Oh yeah, that happens all the time. I wrote a lot about kids when I was in L.A. And I got close to a group of kids who had dropped out of school. You know, they had some issues with the law and they told me stuff that could have gotten me into trouble… So I had to tell my editor and we had this long conversation about if I should go to the cops but I had to get to the bottom of the truth. They told me about somebody dying, getting killed, all these things. In the end, it turned out that there was no murder, that there was somebody trying to act tough. But, you know, that was a situation where I would have had to give up my story. I was working on it for four months or something like that. It would have probably been dead because I would have had to walk away because I knew information about a murder and I was involved with those kids. In other stories, somebody you were interviewing eventually realizes that they really opened up and they're scared and … You know, this is when I go back and talk to them, I mean, I don't read them the whole story. But I'd call them and – this is before it gets published – I'd say 'I included this part that you've told me about'. I don't want them to be shocked. When they open up the paper and are completely shocked and think 'Have I really said that?', I call them, and that usually helps make them feel more comfortable with this situation. This is a conversation, you have to… You can't just talk to that person, step into their life, and then you dip out and you're gone. And they don't know anything about what you're writing, about what's going on. I mean, it's an ongoing relationship and you talk to them. There are people who think 'What I said is shocking, or amazing' and they can't believe they did it. And some of those things are really part of the story, they have to be in, and you have to explain that to them: 'This is what this story is about, your story.' And sometimes after that they're like 'You're right, you're right'. It is their story and they're part of it. They usually get that.

But isn't it also, can't it be really difficult to get to know them in the first place? I think I read something about the one on Nieman, 'The Daughter', where you were trying really hard to get to know this girl. How did you go about that?

That was hard. That was one of the hardest stories. I read about her… We had run a daily story about her, that she was 15, that her father had shot her, the rest of the family is dead. No name, we didn't have a name or anything. And I just thought 'She survived. Isn't that amazing?' And it just kept getting more amazing the more I found out. She spent two days in her apartment, with a bullet in her head, with her family dead around her. And she was 15. And I couldn't get her out of my mind. What happened is I went to the hospital and I just walked into her room. It was kind of amazing that I was able to get in there,

actually. But because I look the way I look, you know, I looked young, I looked Asian, she was Asian, maybe that had to do with it. They didn't ask questions and I didn't say I was a reporter and that I wanted to report, I didn't do that, I just walked in. And I told her I wanted to tell her story and… But after that, she had some issues with her aunt, her aunt didn't want me to tell the story so they cut me off. Then the hospital didn't want me in there, so the hospital, when they found out who I was, kicked me out. It went on like that for a long time. And then, finally, I had her cell phone and I called her one day – she had told me first place that she wanted to tell her story but her aunt and the hospital, everybody else was telling me 'She doesn't want to tell her story'. And I was like 'I know when I was 15, I could make my own decisions'. Actually, I knew that I wanted to be a journalist when I was 16. And, you know, she wanted to tell her story. And so I didn't give up on that, it took me about a month or two, and I finally got her to tell me her story. You have to be incredibly persistent. This is also different than going to a press conference. You have to work your way in. Her church family, her pastor, her best friend, everybody around her, when they'd kind of understood also what I was doing… And she really did want to tell the story. If I would have given up on the first day, I would never have gotten the story. You have to be really persistent, you have to really want to tell the story.

Another thing I'd like to talk about is reconstructed scenes. I think 'The Daughter' is mostly reconstructed. How did you approach that?

I mean, most of the tragedy stories, when you're writing about a catastrophe or something horrible, you're not gonna be there.

Yeah, but somehow you have to make readers believe that this is what actually happened. How do you go about that?

You have to essentially begin with having people tell their story, go through their story. So that I know what the story is, basically. So I know what the storyline is. And then, I usually go back. Many interviews, more that one, you know, usually. And then, you take all your notes and find out what your theme or your storyline is. And then you go back and ask more questions – the classic peeling of the onion, everybody uses that phrase. To get more layers of what, you know…. 'So what color was the carpet of the room you were in? Where did you put your hand when you moved that way? What did you see? What was the smell like? What were you thinking?' And you do that with every scene in the story and then, you do it again, to make sure everything's right and to get more details. Sometimes it's amazing, the things that were left out, that would suddenly come to them, you know. Like with the girl, I had been through all these interviews with her and she didn't tell me that her apartment had gotten broken into. And everything that was important to her was stolen, you know. The girl, she was so into fashion, after being through, you know, her whole family was murdered, she lost everything. She was telling this whole thing to me, what she's been through, but she forgot all that. She was telling me the rest of the story, you know, so that came up later. You have to go back and you have to keep asking all these little annoying questions. Like, why would it matter what the wall looked like? And you do that and you explain them why that's important. I usually say that I'm trying to make sure the readers really feel like they were there with you, tell it through your eyes. We want them to see, to feel, to hear what you were feeling. That's really gonna make the readers understand what you were going through. And that's why I need to know if you remember what shoes you were wearing, you know, what you had in your hair, what was on the wall, things like that. So, going back is really, really important.

And you feel like, when you've done all that, when you've asked all those questions, you feel comfortable leaving out an attribution like 'as she recalls' or something like that when you make sure that's how she recalls it?

I guess it depends on… I feel comfortable. It depends on the editor, it depends on the reporter. With stories like that, when you've interviewed so many times, and this is a story clearly about her, through her eyes, what she thought, what she felt, and I don't have to keep saying that because everybody knows that's what the story is about. It's started that way, it's obviously her story. I feel comfortable, you know.

But is that an issue when you talk with your editor, that you have to attribute the sources?

Let's see. It depends on the editor. And there are different ways to handle it. I have one editor who, at the end of a story, stories like this, there's a box that says, explains where all the things came from, not to interrupt the story with that. Other editors don't like that necessarily and want the attributions… I prefer the box, I don't like the story being interrupted by 'she recalled' and 'he said' because I think you can take care of that in this small endnote, and it kind of interrupts the flow of the story. Especially when you've done so much reporting, you know how to present their story, what they saw and felt. And I don't need hammering the reader over the head, you know what I mean?

But do you understand why readers… Do you actually think readers need this information or is it more the editors who want that to make sure, well, this is not made up?

I think that readers do need to know a lot of things, like where… That's why I think the box can work, you know what I mean? Because it can take care of the problem, you know. Like in the series of 'Enrique's Journey', everything was footnoted, you know. That was really hard. Because, you know, she recreated the entire journey. People thought 'Could it have been like that?' but everything was footnoted. You could do that. So, the best way to handle that is kind of… But I do understand that readers need to know that we're not making this up. And so many reporters don't do that, you know. And narrative, it's all creative, you know, and they probably wonder how you know that. I think it's valid, it's definitely valid. I don't think editors are oversensitive. Because the public has less trust in the media. So we have to explain ourselves, you know, how we got things. I think that's fair.

The next thing is the actual writing. I mean, you've already mentioned that you have to think a lot before you write a story and you have to think of the structure. Is there any special way you go about that? Do you draw a storyline or something like that? How do you do it?

The actual structure of the writing, usually, after you have all your notes, what I do is I organize all the notes into the scene that… I know how the story is gonna go in my mind, the line. And then, I basically organize all the notes. I usually do this on the computer, although I've done it by printing it all out. I put it into sections, so that everything in this section is gonna go here, and here, and here, and here. And then, I kind of write from there. I usually start at the beginning. I start at the beginning and try to write through to the end. But I already have an idea of beginning, middle and end and the kind of scenes that are gonna take me there. And then I collect everything about that scene and put it into one area, then read through it all, mark everything that's important, and then start writing.

In the 'Daughter' story, the structure was quite elaborate. I mean, the way you had parallel scenes going on and… Is that something you are taking from fiction?

Which scenes are you talking about?

I think there was one point where you described how she was creeping on the bathroom floor and at the same time her friend was at church, wondering why she's not there. These kinds of things when you have parallel scenes going on.

That was… I wanna say that was a narrative trick but that was just in my head, that was just me. No, it' just, it was no trick. I would hate to say that I'm an expert in any kind of… I'm not an expert in narrative. I'm doing it, I'm learning it and I've been learning it over the last several years, reading a lot of other narrative writers. And then, I just tried it the way I thought it was done. But that scene… I guess, in a sense, you kind of think like in a kind of movie. And then a movie cuts to different scenes. You know, you get parallel scenes in movies all the time. And then, in a movie, the way you write, it's like, you cut it where the drama is. So I guess I kind of think in that way and it's not necessarily a literary tool that I've studied and I said 'I gonna try to do that'. It was more like thinking cinematically.

What role does language play when you write? Do you think about what effects language has?

I keep it pretty simple because I think there are amazing writers out there who have mastered language – and I haven't yet. And I think that when I try to do that, I overwrite and it just comes off sounding forced. So I keep it simple. And then sometimes a metaphor that I think really works comes to me when I write, and I put it in there. But I don't blow up my writing with it because I don't think I'm an expert enough to be able to do that. There are some writers who are and they're poets, they're really poets. And they just have amazing ways with words. I just don't feel I have that.

So you feel more like a journalist or a reporter than a writer?

Yeah. I love reporting. Writing can be excruciating. I really, like I put it off sometimes because I can't… I sometimes struggle for hours, days over a paragraph. It's really bad for a reporter under a deadline… I love the reporting part of it, I love being out there and getting to know people, all that I love. But the writing part really can be excruciating to me and I don't feel I'm very good at it, you know. I know I can be so much better as a writer and that's why I'm trying. I'm 29 years old, so I'm pretty young compared to most of the people in that profession. And I look up to a lot of reporters and I know how good they are and I think I can never write like that but I want to. And that's why it's frustrating sometimes when I write because, God… If I was Anne Hull, I could write this so much better. And then I try, and whenever I find myself trying to be Anne Hull or writing like Rick Bragg before he left the New York Times, it comes off wrong. It's not me. And that's why I as a writer – and that's what we all do, we all develop our voices over time. And we read a lot and we try things out and we write a lot and then your voice totally comes through in that. And that's where I'm at now, you know. I love the narrative, I love reading it, I love storytelling. The essence of good storytelling, of good narrative, is reporting. So maybe I'll never master the poetry of the language but I can tell stories. And the fact that I'm a good reporter, I think… And I have to remind myself, too. Even if you read Anne Hull or Kurt Streeter or David Finkel, they're not overly flowery in their writing at all. They're not flowery. They just have details that come to life. You know, like amazing details, and it's not forced writing. They're reporting. And that's kind of soothing for me. As long as you can capture those details, then, if you aren't a gifted poet, you can still be a narrative journalist and have really good stories.

You have already mentioned the kind of personal voice that narrative texts project in a way. How important is that for a text, that you read it and feel there's actually somebody telling the story?

Say that again…

I was just wondering about the importance of the narrative voice for you.

I think it's important. Again, I think I do have my own voice. I have definitely developed more of a voice in the last couple of years. And I think there is a voice when you can tell one writer's story from another. I mean, you never have it when you start. You spend years in the profession… I don't say most of us don't start out with it at all… But you know, writing on deadline, writing a lead – all these little things that you have to know, the basic reporting, you really have to know that stuff before you dive into Narrative Journalism. I didn't do narrative for my first five years of reporting. I didn't know what the hell a narrative was. I hadn't any idea. I mean, I read stuff that I thought was really good. But I didn't know the structure. I had a mentor, he is a master in narrative, and I had conversations with him almost every day for a couple of years and we talked about narrative. And then, I started reading and thought: 'Oh, that's what a narrative is. There's storyline, there's character. That's why it's different.' And now, trying to develop a voice, I feel like I have somewhat of a voice. I try when I write to tune out everybody else and kind of like, just write. And then sometimes, sometimes, it comes from within me and I'm able to write naturally. Like the scene, the dual scene, that just came from wherever it came from. And I'm not trying to be somebody else, something like that. I don't use language that I don't normally use. I don't use a word that I don't normally use, that doesn't sound natural to me.

So it has to be you, in a way?

Yeah. I mean you can tell by the way I speak I'm not like the most, I don't know, well-spoken. I don't come off, I guess, really scholarly and somebody who speaks well. I just speak normal language. And I'm trying to do that in my writing, too, not use words that I wouldn't normally use or that other people would think I'm using to be smart. This is not me, you know. But again, I think everybody develops their own voice over time. I learned that, I know that. Mine isn't developed yet but I'm working on it.

One last question on the issue of personal voice: What's your opinion on the reporter being actually present in the text? Saying 'I saw this' or 'I did that', what's your opinion on that?

Kurt [Streeter, Anmerk. d. Verf.] does that. Kurt and his editor, who is my mentor and my editor, do that for a very specific reason because it can show, what we talked about earlier, how, for the reader, how do you know all this. So that gets rid of that right away because you know that the reporter was there and that answers the question, that makes sense. For me, I feel I'm not ready for writing my stories like that. I just am not ready. I think I don't want to take anything away from... like, I don't want it to be about me. I just don't feel comfortable putting myself into the story.

You feel that you tell somebody else's story, not what you…?

When writers do that, magazine writers do that and some others, when they feel that they are part of the story… Again, this is my personal thing but I feel like I don't want to be in it, I don't want to put the attention on me in any way. I haven't done that yet. Not to say I won't – if I feel like I can, you know. But so far, I felt not comfortable being in the story.

Now, going away a bit from the writing and the reporting to the attitudes about narrative in general in the newsroom. What would you say, how is Narrative Journalism perceived in your newspaper? Is it seen as important as investigative journalism or news reporting? Where's its place, in a way?

Our newsroom is going through a lot of changes, so right at this moment, I don't know exactly where it stands. But I can tell you where it has. I came in under the leadership of John Carroll and Dean McKay. And they were a little … McKay wasn't necessarily a narrative guy, he was investigative. John Carroll loved narrative. Both of them recognized and appreciated and really pushed for Narrative Journalism. I mean, they loved it and it was great. They took it completely… They would give us space and time. And now, we have a new editor and I can't really tell what his view on narrative is. Our paper has been moving into a direction, I think, of having less stories that are multiple-days, you know, series stories, unless they're really, really good, unless they really merit being more than one day on the front page. I think the journalists, in the newsroom, have always been a kind of mixed bag. You have a lot of people who are journalists, all kinds of journalists. And there are journalists who never can understand, first of all, never care about learning all these basic things that I had to learn about what a narrative is – that is not important to them, at all. And they are really good at something else… And that's fine. But there is a lot of criticism, I guess, about spending a lot of time on a story. There is a lot of that.

From other journalists?

Yeah. Even if you're an investigative reporter you gonna have people who don't get the luxury of spending two years to investigate something. And with narrative, it's like you're not uncovering a scandal in the White House, you're spending time with one person, a family, you're getting to know these little details, telling your story. And some people don't see that as important. And again it's because of the different kinds of journalists you have in a newsroom. For people like me, those stories are why I'm a journalist. But for other people, it's about uncovering scandals or corruption. And that's cool. If I could do that really well, and some day I might go into this direction, but where I'm in my life so far, there's nothing better than the power of storytelling. But in a newsroom, you may have people that fight narrative, that may not understand the time. Even with the support of Dean McKay and John Carroll, there were people within the newsroom that didn't understand why somebody takes so much time. Sonia Nazario is a good example. She won the Pulitzer for 'Enrique's Journey'. She spent years on that story. And there were definitely people who didn't understand why. And then afterwards, she won the Pulitzer and it was fine, you know. But in the meantime, people were like 'What is she doing with her time?', you know, like 'Why does she get to do that and we don't?'. There's that attitude, I think you can find that in any newsroom. But overall, I think the Los Angeles Times is more friendly towards this kind of journalism than most other newspapers. I feel there's more narrative in the L.A. Times and more good storytelling, I wouldn't say necessarily full narrative, but good storytelling… There's the column that runs every single day on the front page which is storytelling, you know what I mean, not narrative but really good storytelling. You don't see that at the New York Times. I don't see it. They have good storytelling, but you don't always see that on the front page, you gotta go to the magazine or different areas. Sometimes, you don't see it at all. Sometimes, they miss really good storytelling opportunities. And I think that within the L.A. Times, there are so many editors and people who achieve that and get it. Like, my editor now, totally gets it, you know. She loves it, she just loves good stories.

Do you get the time and the resources and everything to do your stories?

Yeah. She gets it. If I'm saying 'I need more time', she gets it. I never had an editor fight me on that at the L.A. Times.

So for you, it's not hard to sell narrative to your editor?

No. You have to convince your editor that you're really passionate about a story and that you really wanna do it this way: 'This is how I'm gonna do it'. I don't know, I never had an

editor fight me on that. But again, it depends on the newsroom. You probably gonna hear different stories. And there are people who don't agree with it. I'm really lucky to be at the L.A. Times because there are so many people who get it, you know what I mean.

There's one thing John Schwartz told me about the New York Times that he feels he is getting less and less space – he can still do narratives but he's getting less and less space. How's the situation at your paper?

Oh yeah. I don't know about the New York Times but it's definitely true at the L.A. Times. But again, that goes back to… There's an idea that 'Why would people read stories that are so long?'. Not that we don't run them, though. We do. But there's a debate there: 'Do we need a 100-inch story?', you know. I got a 100-inch story on 13-year-old kids in a school play and I can't believe I got that much. There was debate about that. I don't know if that would apply today. That was probably a year ago. That was one story where editors had a debate over: 'We don't know if we want this story. Maybe we should cut it up or somehow make it shorter?'. And McKay, Dean McKay, said 'No, we're gonna run it like this'. That was before he left the Times. I remember that, actually, and I bet you that story wouldn't run today. And the same goes for multiple-part series stories. The space for that at the paper is not really there as much because we are working with less resources, at the L.A. Times, we dropped a lot of people, we need everybody to pull their weight at the daily stories. So, when you do narratives, it's a very long time investment… I think it comes down to 'People don't wanna read that much. They just don't want to read four days in a row about a story.' This is kind of that. But there are some stories that are so amazing that run over one or two or three or four days. You should talk to people at the St. Pete Times about that, you really should.

I've already talked to Ben Montgomery there.

Talk to Tom French! I don't think they're having a problem with long narratives. I don't know what's going on there but they always do narrative, always have, and it doesn't seem to be an argument. But my feeling is, that long-term stuff, I don't know about the New York Times but I think you gonna probably see less of it in the L.A. Times.

So you feel that in general it's getting less narrative in the paper?

I do. I feel like we've lost editors and reporters who did narrative and knew how to do it. There's an ongoing battle, I think, between letting people have the time and I guess the space, too, for multiple-part series. But again, if it's a really good story, the editor is not going to stop it. But it has to be a really good story, a really, really amazing story. I mean, the L.A. Times won the Pulitzer for the Ocean series last year. That ran over five days. It was an amazing story, so nobody would fight that. They're not idiots. But if it's an okay narrative or if it's alright but it could be told in one day, or instead of 150, it could be 70 inches, that's it.

Do you think this is also for economic reasons?

I don't know. I feel like economic reasons play into it because we're working with less and we're trying to cut down. But I think it's also the criticism of 'Why does it need to be so long? I don't want to sit down for two hours on my morning paper on a Tuesday when I have to go to work'. Like that, I guess. I think I still have to decide… I still have to figure this out for myself because I love long-form narrative. I also love really good shorter stories that are told with the elements of storytelling and just are powerful. I think there should be both.

I guess it also depends on the story. I mean, some stories have to be long, and others could be short…

Yeah, definitely. I would hate to see it die out. I don't think it's going to, but then I don't know what's happening. I don't know what's happening with my paper. I don't know what's happening with the New York Times or other papers that do this. There are so few right now that really do push narrative. It's growing, on the one hand, with sites like Nieman, but it's struggling, as the newspapers in the U.S. right now are struggling.

The people at Nieman, they say there's some sort of renaissance of Narrative Journalism. Would you agree with that?

I don't know. I think people get… A lot more people know what narrative is because of Nieman, I think, and they practice it. But I don't know if that means that newspapers are going to embrace it, given everything else they have to deal with right now. And they are still struggling… Newspapers are trying to figure out where they belong, like what they can offer different than online. The web is really something where everybody gotta figure out its place. I don't know what's gonna happen.

So you're not sure where Narrative Journalism will be – if it will still be in the newspaper in, I don't know, ten years time?

Yeah, it will be in newspapers. There are people like all of us who love it and people who love to read it, so I don't think narrative is gonna die. I think it's probably gonna be an issue at my paper with space and time, although I could be really wrong on that, I don't know. I'm guessing from where it's heading already, it's not like it was. But I hope… I still believe in it and I know other people do, too, and I know there are people who always will, so it's not gonna die out. And I know people who are going into the profession and they love it and wanna know how to do it. I won't die out. I hope not.

Some people say this is the kind of journalism that could save newspapers. What's your idea on that?

Yeah. Like I said earlier, something has to set newspapers apart from all these other forms of media that give you instant news. We cannot give the news. We can give better stories, do investigation, like textured stories about an issue, and narrative. And I think those types of stories, that's what's gonna make somebody pick up the paper and read it even though they watched the evening news and they already heard everything the night before, you know. If they hear at night about a story that's gripping, and they wanna read it from the beginning to the end… And that's what's gonna make them think: 'How many more stories like that can I read when I pick up the L.A. Times? I wanna read the L.A. Times.' It's different than recapping the evening news. I don't think that's the role of newspapers, and more so now than ever because most people get their news online, you know. They're getting it online. We have to set ourselves apart. And then, there's the argument that we're not magazines, that's another… That's why I think we have to provide different stories.

So you're saying right now is a phase where newspapers have to figure out where they are heading?

Yes, oh yes, definitely. That's why all these debates are going on right now. I mean, in every newsroom we're debating our role on the web, how we can use the web, how we… There's an ongoing debate, everywhere. And not only about narrative, everything we do. We're trying to figure that out, that's all we're doing. Despite dealing with everything that we're dealing with at the L.A. Times since our company… Everybody's trying to figure out

how we can stay ourselves as the L.A. Times in this little changing world. Everything is going online… For me, it comes down to that we have to provide something that nobody else does, and we do. And we have to do that in a really smart way, and narrative is part of it. It's part of that mix. I mean, there are debates going on in the newsrooms, we're all trying to find ourselves. I guess in the New York Times, too.

Yeah, that's basically what he [John Schwartz, Anmerk. d. Verf.] told me. It's really interesting…

The New York Times has more resources… They are trying different things and we are trying different things. They've got like a blog now, a Metro blog, and they do a lot of stuff online. But I'm sure they are having ongoing discussions about like 'Where do we fit in?', you know what I mean. Or something like Newsweek, you know… I was at Virginia Tech and they're not a newspaper but they were slapping stories online because they broke stuff and that's how they are using online – but it's a magazine. So I was thinking – and they do that a lot – 'How are they competing now?'. They have to figure out what their role is because they wanna use their website because they need to, they realize that, too. The web is where it's at. And they're a weekly news magazine, but with the online thing, they're trying to compete with the daily newspapers when they break their stories. And then you can get the New Yorker online now. The New Yorker is all blog not stories, so that's kind of interesting, you know. Why would you buy the New Yorker when you can get it online? All these questions… The New York Times webpage, I mean, they are really sophisticated. And they have the iPhone, you know, the commercial, you can get your Times on your iPhone now, and all this. It's just changing so much. It's gonna be interesting. It's gonna be an interesting next ten years… But we're gonna figure it out.

I hope so.

Yeah.

Okay, so I'm through with my questions. Thank you.

Telefoninterview mit Rick Meyer (*Los Angeles Times*) am 21. September 2007

First of all, could you tell me your exact position at the Los Angles Times?

Well, what I am is a narrative editor. That's what they call me and that's basically what I do. I do an occasional investigation but most of all, I do narratives.

So you work with the narrative writers?

I do indeed.

And since when have you been doing this?

My lord – almost eight years now. Seven years in change.

And how would you, as an expert, how would you describe Narrative Journalism?

Well, I'm hardly an expert. But how would I… I would describe Narrative Journalism as telling a story, an absolutely true, natural story by showing its story arc, by using scenes, by building characters, take actions in those scenes and by using a voice, your writer's voice, which is something you discover you have after a while, something you don't try to force because then it becomes a caricature, something that comes naturally after you've been doing this for a while. By using point of view, most often the point of view of the main character in the story where the protagonist, if you find the right story, overcomes obstacles on his way to a climax. In other words, you use some of the techniques of fiction but you don't fictionalize anything. You try to use some of the tools that fiction writers use but you adhere to the absolute truth, both in terms of the facts and in terms of the larger truth. Does that make sense?

Yeah, it's perfectly clear. What do you think, what kinds of topics lend themselves for a narrative approach?

What kind of what? I'm sorry.

Topics.

Okay, topics. Well, you know, I think there's this sort of mistake that we all make, that the story idea is something that blossoms in your head and you have this story idea, this idea of a story. Occasionally, that happens, but by far more often, reporters find stories that are out there, that had happened or that are happening and they either reconstruct the story or they become invisible and they immerse themselves in the lives of their characters in the story as it unfolds. Those are two ways, and of course, the second way takes longer, because you have to be there when things happen and it's probably more difficult, although a reconstruction can be difficult, too. But those are essentially two ways, you know…

And you could do that for any kind of story?

You know, some stories lend themselves. You know, some stories in magazines or newspapers are not stories. Stories are accounts that have a beginning, a middle and an end. A lot of newspaper stories are not stories, they are articles. And they don't proceed chronologically, they proceed logically. And those kinds of stories do not lend themselves very well to narrative writing. Stories that have a beginning, a middle and an end, those stories lend themselves to narrative writing. Those are the ones you look for.

I was just wondering because I looked at quite some narrative texts in American newspapers, and I had the feeling that many of them dealt with some kind of, I don't know, some accident or illness, or catastrophe, these kinds of things. Would you say that that's typical?

Well, it's true. Many of them do, and probably far too many of them do. You know, there are many other things, many other kinds of stories that lend themselves to a narrative treatment. For instance, one of our writers out here, a fellow named Kurt Streeter, did this five-part series about a little girl who wanted to become a boxer. Now, there was no accident, no catastrophe, nobody was injured, there was no recovery, there was nothing, nothing you can call a, you know, a terrible thing. What that story did was it followed her efforts for a year and a half to become a boxer and she did indeed become quite good. And the chapters of the story built around her successes and her failures, and then her efforts to recover and her successes and then, perhaps, another failure and then her grand success. Now, that's a narrative. And it has rising and falling action, and it has a beginning, a middle and an end, and she's overcoming obstacles, and the obstacles are in the way by circumstances or in her way by antagonists, her opponents in the ring. And finally, she prevails, big time, and so, there's a narrative. And it has nothing to do with a car accident or a tragedy or anybody becoming paralyzed or such things. When you do the latter kind of story, the kind you're talking about, you have to be very, very careful that you don't become mawkish, that it doesn't turn into some kind of model in terms of… Now, in the end, it might indeed evoke some tears but the trick is to do it without being mawkish. If you're mawkish, all you're doing is you're manipulating readers. And they can feel manipulated, you know. And some will realize what's going on, to them, what you, the writer, are doing to them, you are manipulating. You're jerking tears out of them. That's mawkish and it's to be avoided at all costs. You can write a story about a tragedy, and someone recovering from a terrible… In fact, Kurt Streeter's most recent story was about a girl who was severely brain-damaged in a terrible car accident. And it's a story of her efforts to recover and I think, I hope, we stayed this side of being mawkish. I hope we weren't manipulating. I think we pulled it off and so… You're right, a lot of stories are about that sort of thing but I would argue that maybe too many of them are. And there are plenty of other stories out there that you can write, little girl boxers and all that, without being mawkish.

And what do you think, these stories that we are talking about, what kind of function could they have in the newspaper? Why would you print them?

Because when there is a lot at stake, when there is a public issue at stake, what you're doing is you're showing readers – showing them and not telling them, that's the difference between narrative and a story as an article, an article will tell you something, a narrative will show you something. An article will tell you what happened. A narrative will show you what it was like to be there. That's the key difference. So, okay, what is the function of narrative? If it illuminates an important public issue, that's a good function for a newspaper story to have. If it simply parts the curtain on humanity, it shows you something about human nature, that's another function narratives have. And of course, narratives tend to be very good reads. What they do is, they not only show people something what they need to know, they teach you something but they also evoke reactions from readers, you know. A good narrative will make someone laugh, or make someone angry, or make someone cry, or make someone feel fear on behalf of the protagonist of the story and also, if it's about a broad public issue, perhaps on their own behalf, if this issue affects them. And that's the function of narrative.

To evoke emotions?

Well, to show and to teach and to evoke.

But also, I guess, to entertain because you said it's usually a good read.

Sure. That's the good read part of it, to entertain. Some stories, some narrative stories are just funny. And they have no redeeming quality other than just being funny. And God knows we all need a laugh. And if a narrative does nothing but give you a chuckle, then the writer has accomplished something, your laugh.

What I'm also interested in is how Narrative Journalism fits into newsrooms today. I mean, newspapers lose readers, there have been cuts everywhere. So I'm interested in how it still works that you can do this kind of journalism in the newspaper?

Well, this kind of journalism takes longer, is very labor-intense and it needs some space in the newspaper. And time, space, all that costs money. And Narrative Journalism, when newspapers are struggling, Narrative Journalism sometimes struggles as well. But what publishers and newspaper owners have to keep in mind is that Narrative Journalism attracts a huge readership. Kurt's last story on the high school girl with brain damage, it got close to 400 e-mails, just to Kurt, that doesn't count the e-mail that the newspaper got on the website. Okay, so those are the folks who were captured by the intro of the story on page one and then went to the jump and read it through, I guess three full newspaper pages on the inside. That's a lot of space, you're asking a lot of readers. But God knows how many actually read it. At least, nearly 400 of those who read it were so affected by it that they sat down and wrote to Kurt. Well, okay, that sort of reaction, you don't get that kind of reaction on an ordinary news story, unless it's a story about a hurricane or some…. you know, unless it's 9/11, maybe you'd get that kind of reaction. But I doubt that you would get 400 readers to respond even in that case. Certainly, they wouldn't take the time to write to the newspaper, write to the reporter, saying 'oh my god, what a hell of a good story that is'. They wouldn't do that, they wouldn't do it. Even something like a public event, the inauguration of the President or whatever it's gonna be that makes the headlines, you don't see readers responding 'Man, that was a great story on the inauguration'. It may lead the paper but you don't get that kind of response. Even at one hell of a big event, very important, we don't get that kind of response. That kind of response comes from people getting caught up in the non-fictive narrative that your story offers. They get caught up and all of a sudden, they lose themselves in the story and then you know you've accomplished something. You know then, if you've written this well and you've reported this well, they'll come to the end of the story drained, as you get drained by a good novel or a good short story or a good narrative story of any kind. A non-fiction narrative does the same thing to readers. Okay. So, where does this fit in newspapers? It should fit fairly high on the list of priorities because people are attracted to these kinds of stories, these kinds of stories they get caught up in and they respond to these kinds of stories. And then, they look for more. And that's why these stories should have a high priority.

You said they should have a high priority but do they really have it?

At some newspapers, they do. We've got a number of folks who write narratives out here. Erika is one, Kurt's another. Sonia Nazario won a Pulitzer for her narrative on 'Enrique's Journey', it went into a book and is becoming an HBO movie. Some newspapers, they pay attention to this stuff and they give it priority. I just told you about Kurt's story, well, they cleared out three inside pages of the paper… Let's see. You can get this story. It ran August 26th, so you should be able to get it online. Another person out here who writes narrative is Tom Curwen. He wrote a story about a grizzly bear attack.

Yeah, I've read that one.

That's a good example. That was two parts, and each one of those ran two or three open pages on the inside. Kurt's was three open pages on the inside. Well, this is the kind of priority the L.A. Times gives this kind of work. Three open pages, ad-free, I mean three pages without ads on them, on the inside of the newspaper. That costs money. Kurt worked on this story – I don't know, I have to stop and think – six, eight months. Well, that cost money. We assigned a photographer and she worked as much as Kurt did and those three open pages are full of her photographs, and that cost money. So, this is not a trivial undertaking. And that's just one. I mean, the grizzly story cost more money. Kurt's story about this little girl-boxer was five parts, it was a series. Sonia's story about Enrique's journey… Are you familiar with that?

Yes, I know it.

Okay, that one took, I don't know, three years and a lot of travel in Central America and Mexico, with a photographer. It won two Pulitzers, one for the story and one for the photographs. That was a six-part series and each part was two or three open pages in the newspaper. Okay, now you're talking about real bucks and the L.A. Times is willing to invest that kind of money and effort into Narrative Journalism because it knows, like some other newspapers don't or aren't willing to recognize, that those kinds of stories get readers… Hang on half a minute… (spricht im Hintergrund)
That's Kurt Streeter who was speaking… So, you know, we are willing to invest that kind of money and effort into Narrative Journalism because we are recognizing that it gets readers, it just does. And when we publish one of these, we get the reaction that proves it. And okay, what's this business all about? It's about getting readers, so that you can grow circulation, or you can at least stem the terrible drain that all newspapers are experiencing these days.

So, narrative would be one way to save newspapers, maybe, or to help them?

You better would, my God, yes. And it should be one of the ways that is high on the list, because, you know, the larger your circulation, the more effective your ads are and the more you can charge for them. That's how newspapers make money, believe it or not. And that's how… Narrative Journalism is one way they can stem the drain, the circulation drain. And I gotta tell you, stories like Streeter's stories, and Sonia's, or Tom Curwen's bear story, it hits on the website… You know, they count the clicks, I forget what the exact term is, I don't know…

I think it is 'hits'…

I'm not sure. I'm not conversant enough in the internet… But they count these things, and these stories get enormous readership on the internet, even though they're long. It's another mistake we make, we think that the attention span is very short. When it comes to stories that tell you something that's happening, that's probably true. You can't go three whole pages on the inside of the newspaper with a story about the inauguration of the President.

Yeah, probably not.

And it cannot support that kind of readership on the internet, either. Probably the length of that kind of story on the internet is, you know, most optimistically maybe 1,000 words. But the kind of readership these stories get, these long stories, on the internet, kind of tells you that a narrative story that has a beginning, a middle and an end, readers will stick with you, even on the internet, to find out what happens, how this comes out. Does she recover or doesn't she? Does she get to go to the prom or doesn't she? Does she graduate or doesn't she? Those are all questions that they wanna find the answer to. And

they will read it on the internet right to the end, at least that's our experience. And so, not only does it save newspapers in terms of print copies but it saves newspapers as well in terms of their websites.

Okay.

Now, am I windy or what?

No, this is really interesting, seriously. Another thing I'd like to ask: I mean, you've been in this position for quite some time now, what would you say, what's the tendency? Is there more or less of this kind of writing in the newspaper?

Well, in ours there's probably a bit less than there has been and that's because we've cut our staff. And we lost some very fine narrative writers. In the last buy-out, we lost six Pulitzer Prize winners, not just narrative writers but of all kinds, people who won Pulitzers writing editorials even, right. We lost some fine narrative writers, too. We lost J. R. Moehringer, for instance, who won a Pulitzer writing narrative. Well, okay, you can't lose people and increase the number of narrative stories you have in the paper. You cannot lose narrative writers and increase the number of narratives that you have. That just doesn't work. So, there are fewer now, and that's sad and it tells you how damaging cuts can be. If you're not careful when you trim a newspaper's staff, you damage the newspaper. And this is one way, if you reduce the number of writers who write narrative stories, when you do that, you hurt yourself.

But what do you think, what will it be like in the future? I mean, it might be that there are even further cuts and at some point, newspapers won't be able to do these kinds of stories.

I hope that day doesn't come. I hope this bottoms out and I hope that the internet revenue climbs even faster than it's climbing and even higher than it climbs. I hope that the drain of circulation finally stops and then we can build again. I don't think newspapers, print newspapers, are gonna go away. I think the future holds some sort of combination of printed newspaper plus the internet version and maybe even, you know, they have these electronic tablets you can download an entire newspaper onto, an electronic tablet that you can even roll up. And something like that is what newspapers are gonna look like. My, as long as you have newspapers, as long as you have magazines, you have a place for Narrative Journalism because you get caught up in these stories, people read these stories and they learn from these stories and they react to these stories. And they like these stories. And no matter what form the delivery vehicle takes in the future… This stuff is captivating. And so why should it go away? We're talking about how it's delivered, delivered on paper, on your computer-screen or delivered on some sort of electronic tablet in the future. I don't think the delivery system makes that much difference. People like this stuff, and however it's delivered, it'll survive and it'll thrive.

I mean, I hope you're right, too.

I don't know, I also do hope I'm right.

I hope you've still got some time. There's one more thing I'd like to ask you because you've already mentioned the importance of a narrative voice. How do you, as an editor, work with your reporters? How do you try to get this voice out?

Well, you know, voice is something… This is the way I kind of discovered it: When you start out writing, you have no voice of your own, at least none that you know of. You have one but you don't know it. And so, when you begin writing, when you write journalism, you

write in the institutional voice, right. And you write what Mark Kramer – somebody you ought to talk to, you know who he is?

Yeah, I actually also met him, he came to Germany some time ago, so…

If he can talk to you, Mark will tell you that this institutional voice is the voice of the sentinel at the city gate, it's the voice of somebody that announces to you what's happening, right. That's the institutional voice of journalism. And then, pretty soon, as you write enough of this, you should begin to realize that what you have here is a rather dull and somewhat constrained voice that you're using to present this stuff. And you become sort of not satisfied with it, you know. And you also begin to notice that very good writers have very distinctive voices of their own. And okay, so you notice Ernest Hemingway, he has a distinctive voice. Let's also pick a woman: Virginia Woolf. And you say to yourself: 'I got to develop my own voice!' And the first thing you do you try to imitate people whose voices you recognize. You try to write like Tom Wolfe, you try to write like Ernest Hemingway or you try to write like Susan Orlean, or you try to write like William Faulkner, God help you! And okay, that's the second step. It's imitating and it's derivative, right, but at least it's not the institutional voice that newspapers have in their news stories. And then you're trying to write features and narratives and your voice is imitating someone else's voice, it is derivative. And very soon you recognize that all your writing is bad Hemingway. And so you get discouraged. Oh man, this is the low point. You say: 'Argh, this is awful, I give up'. But you keep writing and you don't try to force any voice. You quit trying to imitate, you quit to develop any voice of any kind. You just write naturally because you are so discouraged. And as you write more and naturally, you discover that you have a voice on your own and it's beginning to come out. You can feel it, you can recognize it. God, I watched this happen with Erika. Erika now has a very distinct voice of her own. And believe me, when she joined the Metro staff, she went through all these steps. I don't know who she tried to imitate, God I don't know. Maybe she tried to… God knows I did this. I've tried to imitate Chuck Powers, for instance, who was a writer here at the paper. Or Dave Smith who is now dead, God bless him. And before I got here, I tried to imitate people at the AP. And then, I tried even to imitate Hemingway myself. I went through all this. And I'm sure Erika did. Pretty soon, she just kind of quit imitating anyone and she discovered, you know, after she had a low point, she gave up trying to develop a voice, she discovered that voice comes naturally. And you just write, you write plainly and clearly and tightly. You have developed a voice all of your own. It's kind of like Jazz. You can tell one Jazz musician from another, listening. I can take my thumb and put it over the byline of various stories in the newspaper and I can tell you who wrote them. And that's voice, that's this person's voice. I can put my thumb over a by-line and I can tell you that's Erika, that's Kurt, that's Sonia. I can tell you if it's Barry Siegel, I can tell you if it's Barry Siegel or Barry Bearak at the New York Times or Dan Barry at the New York Times. I can put my thumb over it… That's the byline test: If you can stick your thumb over the byline and tell who wrote the story, than that person has a voice.

And you think that's important for Narrative Journalism?

God, yes. Absolutely.

Why would you say it's so important?

Because when you write a narrative, you make a pact with the reader, okay. By the fact that you're writing a narrative, you gain the reader's trust: 'I'm going to tell you, reader, what happened here and what it was like to be here. Come with me. Let me take you by the hand. Trust me, reader. We're gonna go on this journey with this protagonist together. I'm gonna take you along – on 'Enrique's Journey'. I'm gonna take you along, with this little girl-boxer as she tries to become a champion.' Okay, that's the agreement that you

make. And if you have your own voice, and you just let that voice – it's kind of wrong to say you use it because that sounds like you're forcing it. But you write in your own voice. The reader recognizes the voice and begins to trust the person who has this voice. You know, when you were a little girl, you heard your father's voice and you knew it was him and you knew you were gonna be okay. You knew that he was gonna take care of you, no matter what was going on. When you heard his voice, you knew it was fine. If he wanted to take you on a journey somewhere, you were willing to go, and all you had to do is hear his voice. Same thing happens when you embark on a narrative with a writer. You come to listen to the voice as a voice you trust. You go on this journey. That's why voice is important. That's also how you can evoke some emotions. You know, if your voice is wry… Just the way you write something can make the reader smile, just the way you write it. The reader can sense by your voice that you're tensing up the tension. If the reader can sense that you're beginning to get angry, the reader will get angry, too. You know, just like if you heard your father expressing anger at someone, you would immediately feel angry toward that person, too. 'He's making my Daddy mad, so I gotta be mad at him, too!' That's what it does.

Part of it could also be that you write in the first person. What's your idea on that?

Okay. First person is a question of voice, sure. It's a way in which you can… You don't have to write in the first person to have a voice. But it's a way that you can use your voice. Sometimes, it helps. But that's not the real use that I see to first person. First person to me has these uses: First of all, if you become a character in the story yourself. For instance in that little girl-boxer story, at one point, Kurt is in the gym and there's this gang fight that breaks out in the gym and the little girl's father, who was a former gang-banger, this guy says to Kurt 'Come on over here'. And as he's saying this, Kurt goes over near him and somebody from a rival gang throws a chair. And the chair hits Kurt. So, Kurt is one of these casualties in this gang fight. So suddenly, he's become a character in the story, and if he picks up the chair and throws it back and takes out one of the gang members, knocks him cold, he's not only become a part of the story, but now he's a participant in the story. He's required to put himself in. That requires you to put yourself in. When you become a character in the story, even more so when you become a participant in what's going on in the story, you have to bring yourself in because you have affected the outcome of the story, right. The father prevails in the gang fight and you've helped him, you have affected the outcome of the story. And ethics require you put yourself in there.

Because it would be kind of untrue if you left yourself out, right?

Exactly, you got it. And you can't do that. So, that's one reason for first person. Another reason for first person, take another Kurt story. He's part of what happens in the operating room and Kurt is in there. And he witnesses the entire surgery. And he talks to the surgeon while it's going on. And he's asking and the surgeon is explaining while he's in there what's going on, what he's doing inside of her brain. If Kurt took himself out of there, there would be no way for the reader to know how the hell Kurt knew. So he needs to be in there in first person for attribution reasons. So that the reader knows how Kurt knows. So, becoming part of the story, affecting the outcome of a story, and attribution, those are basically the three reasons to use the first person. You can also, like you were saying, make the first person part of your voice, you can do that, too. But you can have a voice without putting yourself in the story. That's your choice. When you become a character in the story, when you become a participant, and certainly when you affect the outcome of a story, and for attribution reasons, those are reasons to put yourself in the story that have nothing to do with voice. Does that help?

Yeah.

Kurt's back, so I gotta talk to him.

Okay, thanks so much for taking the time.

Interview mit Laura Meckler (*Wall Street Journal*) am 14. September 2007

First of all, could you tell me what your exact position is here at the Wall Street Journal?

I'm a staff reporter in the Washington bureau.

And do you have any special beat?

I cover health care.

And since when have you been working here?

May 2005.

Okay. My main topic is Narrative Journalism. So what's your idea of it? How would you describe this kind of journalism?

What is Narrative Journalism? Well, I've only done a handful of narrative pieces, so it is not something I specialize in. But for me, it's going deeper into the lives of a few people, one or more people, and rather than writing it from the point of view of a reporter's analysis of the issue, it's going deeper into their lives and telling a story as you would in fiction …. Hold on (sie telefoniert).

So we talked about what your idea of Narrative Journalism was…

Yes. It's going deeper into someone's life and telling the story – when I said like fiction, I didn't mean making it up, I mean telling it as a story. So that the action unfolds as the story progresses. And you have scenes where you bring people into the room and show them what it was like to be there. Dialogue, where people are talking to each other, not talking to the reporter but talking to each other. Details. So what do the rooms look like, what was someone dressed like. Things that give people a flavor of what theses people are like and what they're going through. That's my idea of Narrative Journalism.

What do you think, what kind of function do these stories have for the newspaper? Why would you…?

They give you insight into the world. Part of our function as the newspaper is to help people understand the world better, and this gives you… Sometimes, we give people information about the world by writing about what the President says. But sometimes, we give people information about the world by writing about what one person goes through because chances are they're not the only person who has experienced it, it's something that has a more universal take. And I guess sometimes you might write a story about somebody who is… nobody would ever go through that, that was just a unique situation but that's a good story, a good yarn. Sometimes, it's just interesting.

So you'd say any kind of topic lends itself for this narrative approach?

It could be. If you have a good story and you have good characters, theoretically yes. I don't know if the Journal would do just any story, it would have to be something that's topical. I mean, in this case it was about organ donation. A lot of people do this. A lot of people have become living donors. This living donation has become very common but it's very rare that people have a chance to go into it and understand the complexities of what people go through.

How much time did it take you to report that story ["The High Price of Keeping Dad Alive", Anmerk. d. Verf.]?

About eight months.

Okay. So you kept going back to them.

I followed… Well, I found them not in the beginning but when he was first getting tested, I met Mark Foster.

How did you find him?

I found him through the hospital. I told the hospital that I was interested. I asked them I was interested to talk to their potential donors as they were coming through, whether they'd be interested in talking to me. I actually went through some other people before I got to him. So he called me, we started talking on the phone. I was looking for somebody who wasn't sure if they wanted to do it or not. The story was going to be about someone making up their mind. So I wanted someone who wasn't sure. When I first talked to him, I thought he was very interesting and very articulate. So I went up with him for his first round of testing and got to know the family. That was in May. And I just kept following them. It turned out the surgery didn't happen till November, so it just took a while. I was with them throughout. Once I started, I stayed with it.

I remember when I read the story… You were not always with them, there were things that they recalled. I noticed that you always tried to attribute things and said well 'he recalls' or 'both men remember'. Other journalists don't do that, they just tell it because they feel confident.

Well, the Journal feels strongly in terms of attribution, so that if we just say something happened, chances are that we were there, too, to observe it. So we want to be clear, if it isn't something we were there for, that we want to signal that somebody … just what you caught. Not everybody realizes that but you did, and that's fine. That's the point, to make it clear. So if they were having a conversation at two o'clock in the morning, I wasn't there. And that's okay. I mean, I don't have a problem with the way other people do it. But the policy here is to do it this way.

So this is like a Wall Street Journal rule?

Sort of, I think so. I think it's the policy. In general, not always. All policies have exceptions, you know.

Concerning the writing process: When you were writing that piece, did you follow a certain structure? Did you have in mind that it had to have some kind of arc?

It was really a structure based on time, going through it as it unfolds. I mean, the narrative arc was pretty obvious. Well, the story opens with a moment in the middle but then it goes back to, I think we started with their marriage. So it just went through time. And then, there were major points along the way that were key moments, so I don't know if that's a narrative arc per se. You probably studied this more than I have.

Another thing, I mean. you got pretty close to that family. Was that a problem at some point? You tell things that people usually wouldn't like to talk about, for example his dad's alcohol problem. Was it difficult to get this close?

I found it very easy to get close to Mark and his mom. They both really wanted to talk. And I think they appreciated having me there. I know they did, they told me afterwards, that it was just nice having me with them as they went through it and having someone who would listen to them non-judgmentally. Just hear what they have to say, who didn't have a stake. I think that's why they told me so much. The dad was a little more closed. I spent a lot of time with him and he would also talk to me. The hard thing was to talk to him about what his family had said. That was really hard for me. But I just screwed up my courage and asked him. And one thing I also did was I didn't want them to be surprised by what was in the story, so I told them what was going to be in the story before I ran it. The dad was not happy with everything but the other people, I mean, why they opened up… Mark actually has a blog. Have you looked at his blog?

Yes.

If you read through it, there's a lot in there. He talks about the experience of going through the story in a few places. And he says 'Why did I do it? Well, she asked and she listened and she listened sincerely. It just all came out'. I mean, he talks about that. If you look, you'll find those clues in there. And I think in this case, that was the key. That I just was someone who was around, talking to them a lot, willing to listen to them. I think that's why they were willing to open up. I don't know if they… The reason the mom was willing to open up was that Mark wanted his story told. He wanted this to happen. So he gave his mom permission to talk to me. So at one point, something came up and the mom said she would be talking about this with me here, and Mark was like 'Yes, you can tell her anything'. And I think people just want to be listened to. And they realized that they were going to be in the paper. Ever so often somebody would tell me something and say 'I don't want that in the story'. So I kept that out. And those things were always fine to keep out. The reason why I was happy that they said that was that made me realize that they knew that everything else might end up in the story. So the fact that every so often Mark would say 'This is off the record' was very comforting to me because, like I said, that was an acknowledgment that the rest was on the record. They weren't upset by the story, I mean, the mum and Mark were both fine with it.

But the dad wasn't fine with it?

I mean, he didn't come out that well in the story and it was harder for him. But he was okay. He was like 'we're still friends' or something like that, you know.

So, back to the whole writing process: What role does language for you? Do you think a lot about how you put things? I mean it's a different kind of language than the regular news-writing language, I guess.

Can you just hold on a second… (spricht mit einem Kollegen)
What was the question?

Language…

Right, language. I can't say I think a lot about it. I think it's mostly writing it in a way that tries to bring people into the room. So it's more… You can write something from 10,000 feet or from one foot and that's what I was trying to do, or ten feet. I was trying to really be in there. I think it's mostly… I've heard people who are much better in this than I am say that good writing is about good reporting. And you have to have the details. If you don't have the details, you can't do it. What I had, I had too much. I had notebooks and notebooks, pages and pages of notes. So it was a matter of paring it down. I wrote a much longer draft and we pared it out, took out, took out and got it down to sort of its essence,

I think. We left a lot on the cutting-room floor. But, you know, I just wrote it, the words as they came. And I had a lot of good editing, too.

Another thing I'd like to talk about is the importance of the narrative voice that people use in this kind of storytelling. One thing is that people use the first person in these sorts of texts. What's your view on the first person?

I've never done a first person story. I guess my view is that if you're going to write something that happened to you, you'd better have a pretty good story. And if you do, then sure…. I don't have any experience with first person. So this voice was an outsider voice, trying to, at times, be in the heads of the different persons.

What do you think, in general, are the attitudes towards this kind of storytelling here at the Journal?

I think that they are very open to it, you know. I didn't have any resistance from it. We don't do a lot of it but we do it. We do this sporadically, and I think that they are supportive.

Has it the same level of acceptance as the investigative journalism?

I mean, they gave me 4,000 words, which is almost twice as long as a typical front page story. When I had a good story, the page-one editor was very excited about it, the Saturday editor was very excited about it, you know. I had total support on this story.

So it was not hard for you to sell it.

No, no. I mean, once I had the goods. It's all about having a good story here. It doesn't matter if it's a breaking story, if it's a narrative, an investigative – if it's a good story, they will support it.

And it was also okay for you to take eight months to report it?

I mean, I did other things, too. But my editors were just like 'take the time you need'. Once they believed it was a good story, they… you know, I had a lot of time. I had three weeks when I did nothing but working on writing it. Three or four weeks, something like that. So yes, I got a lot of time.

Some people here in the U.S. say that there is some kind of renaissance of narrative writing in newspapers. Would you agree with that?

I don't know about that. I mean, is there a renaissance of narrative writing, is that the question? I don't know enough to answer the question. I guess, maybe. But I don't know enough.

But could you say something about the situation here at the Wall Street Journal, if there is a tendency to do more or less of it?

I have only been here for two years, so I don't have a big sense of the history here. Sorry. I would say that the Journal tries to get the techniques of Narrative Journalism, like scenes, setting, in a lot of stories. A lot of stories have scenes in them, even if it's not a narrative piece per se. So there is a lot of effort towards that, using the techniques of narrative.

I've also learned that a lot of newspapers had to cut costs and the pages are getting smaller, less and less people work there. That's why some journalists say 'Well, it's hard to do this kind of journalism in this environment'.

Well, I only tried it once and it was successful, so I haven't had a problem. Our pages have gotten smaller but at the same time, I think if you get a great story, there is room and space for it. I haven't experienced any problems, that's all I can say. I have no doubt that that's true at other papers. I'm not questioning them. I just have not personally experienced it.

How did the readers react to this story?

In general very positive, I got a lot of very positive comments.

And did you get more comments than you usually get?

Yes. I got a lot more e-mail than I usually get.

So, one more question and we're through. Some people say that this could be the future of newspapers. I mean, the news will at some point be all on the internet, so what's left for the newspapers?

I think that this is part of what's left for the newspaper but I think there will always be a spot in newspapers for when you're really breaking something that hasn't been … If you have something exclusively, that, I think, will often end up in the paper … To the extent, assuming that we still have newspapers as opposed to just websites. But you know, there's analytical reporting… The Journal, as a general rule, tends to not be off the news. It tends to assume people already know the news of the day and take a tack. Our front page maybe only has one story that's a newsy story. I mean, here, 'National Giants Struggle to Crack Brazil Market', this is enterprise. 'A Mother Takes on MIT', this is enterprise. This is also … 'You Have to Understand Shiites in Iraq'. You know, these three stories are more like enterprise stories. And you'll see the same thing inside the paper. We're already adapted to that new world. I think narrative is one part of it, I don't think it's the only way.

Good, okay.

Is that it?

Yeah, I think so. Thank you.

Interview mit Barry Newman (*Wall Street Journal*) am 25. September 2007

Could you please tell me your exact position at the Wall Street Journal and since when you've been working there?

Exact position – I don't have an exact position, I have a weird position. I started working in 1970 and I just turned 60 years old and I was overseas for 21 years, came back here ten years ago. I was working for six years in New York for the Journal before I left. And before that, I was a, you know, clerk at the New York Times for three years. I had another job on a newspaper in college. And I was made into a feature writer, so-called, in 1973, when the Wall Street Journal was a totally different publication. At the time, there was virtually nothing in the paper except for feature stories and a lot of financial news. So it was more like a magazine wrapped around a newspaper. And it stayed that way until almost exactly seven years ago, effectively stayed that way. When I came back here – I covered Eastern Europe for eleven years, that's what I was doing at the end, before that I covered Western Europe, and before that, I was in Singapore for five years and covered Southeast Asia and various other places. So, I did a lot of traveling. And I was lured back here, basically, with the offer to work directly for page one as a feature writer. And three and a half years after I got back here, there was a putsch at the Wall Street Journal, a major change, which changed my life to the negative. The independence of the page one editor was abolished. The page one editor for 40 years was like a magazine editor who could decide what he wanted to print regardless of the news. And so he took a long view of things and stories were beautifully slow and without consideration for what happened yesterday. Seven years ago, in March of 2000, the managing editor changed this policy. The page one editor at the time was removed and he was replaced by a new page one editor who reported to the news department head, not to the managing editor. So page one, instead of being autonomous and independent as a kind of magazine, became a branch of the news department. So the whole nature of this magazine format turned into a struggle to preserve parts of what the Journal stood for from my perspective while accommodating this feeling that the world is moving so fast and so many things were happening and business and financial news is no longer a secondary consideration, it's absolutely driving the world and it must be, you know, there must be news on page one. So the Wall Street Journal got to be, very quickly, much less like a magazine and much more like a newspaper. And the ability to get the kinds of stories I used to do into the paper was radically disrupted. And I've been living with that for the last seven years. So my… I was working directly for page one, but in 2000, or 2001, I was removed from page one, my editor, who is a wonderful guy, went off to write a book about beer and then, he became in charge of the book project, the book production of the Journal, and now, he's left to work for a magazine, a new magazine called Portfolio which is a kind of magazine for business, produced by Condé Nast, it's kind of a Vanity Fair magazine with a focus on business, celebrities and investigative reporting but involved in business. That person, I no longer worked for him, I was no longer attached to page one, I was assigned to the Los Angeles bureau and the reason is that I was specializing in – you need a specialty of some kind when you're a domestic reporter. I was specializing in immigration because having been overseas for a long time I knew a lot of foreigners. You know, 'He's dealt with foreigners, let him do the immigration'. So I was continuing to cover immigration. California has a lot of immigrants, there was a Latino reporter in California, and there is one now, also, who covers immigration. I always covered, you know, Eastern Europeans, Russians, Indians and Chinese and much less Latinos. But the effect of the change in organization made it much more difficult for me to write with a personal voice, with my own sense of organization. Stories became much newsier. It was necessary to put news up high. The editor who took over page one believed in a pattern of organization that I disagreed with. It was more simple-minded. It believed in chronology based on time, whereas I always believed in developing stories with jumping around in time. He wanted

the stories to be less complex, less elliptical. And he believed in something he called the set-up, which I despise, which is: 'You start a story and then you have a long, long, long sort of news story stuck into it and then you get back to the narrative.' I always believed that the narrative should come first and that, as you read the story, you should, in appropriate moments, take side-trips to the things that are background, statistics, history, details and so on. So I have this endless frustration and disappointment with this editor. And I stuck it out for reasons that I can't explain. Where else would I work, you know? And my ideas are so quirky that I have not been able to get a book contract, that's, you know, I've done a couple of book proposals. I wanted to do a book on pickled herring but nobody wanted that…

No?

So I did another book proposal last year on outsider art, they call it 'l'art brut' in French, but I couldn't get anyone interested in that, either. And then, this is September, in, let's see, in March, it was obvious that the Journal was going to have a new management. You know, it's a very good newspaper but it's been lost, it's been lost because it doesn't know what it is any more. And it's a terrible crisis for all newspapers, particularly bad at the Journal because financial advertising collapsed, you know. Also, in the same period, when they were changing the structure, the dot-com bubble burst, the financial advertising collapsed, they had 9/11. You know, the Journal's newsroom was destroyed. It was a psychological blow… Danny Pearl was murdered. Everyone was in a state of disarray, personally, psychologically – a terrible impact. The managing editor reached the age of 65 and he had to retire. So, in March, this past March, there was a question of who was gonna become the next editor. And the competition was, partly, at least, between the head of the news department, who had established this new structure, and another guy, who was actually an ex-foreign correspondent, which is significant because very few managing editors have international experience in the history of the Journal, not so for other papers… So, who I thought was more sympathetic. And he called me before he got the appointment and told me to stick around because he wanted to try to revive some of the traditions of storytelling at the Journal. And I said: 'This is terrific, you know. God blessed me at last.' I've been, you know, it's like being released from Auschwitz. I've been… suddenly, I'm not a political prisoner, I'm out. So what happened was, very shortly after that, this fellow, the one I wanted, gets the appointment. And then, instantaneously after that, Rupert Murdoch buys the newspaper. And Rupert Murdoch has given two interviews at least in which he singled out the kind of story I write as the ones that he doesn't like.

I wanted to ask you about that because I read one of those interviews and I thought 'He's basically saying he doesn't want to read these long stories any more'.

Not only long stories, but what he talks about… The stories that I write are called A-heads because of the… It's just called A-head because that's the name of the headline. And he specifically told Time magazine that he doesn't want them every day and that he is thinking that maybe you could sweep them into a magazine on Saturday. And so immediately all my hopes were dashed. Two days after I had this terrific high, all of a sudden now, nobody knows what's going to happen. So, what I've done this year, I mean, there was a big immigration bill in congress this year and the reporters in Washington and California essentially covered the hard news. I did two long immigration stories but realizing that they are short of A-heads all the time, I decided to just focus on A-heads, and I did a bunch of old-fashioned, simple A-heads. Like that one: 'Man Shoots a Cat'. And yet, even though I feel like I'm doing what the new managing editor wants, I'm in an absurd limbo right now because this is September, the deal closes in November, there's already stirrings of what Murdoch is planning to do. But nobody knows. Nobody knows. So my whole sense of what am I doing, why am I doing it, do I wanna keep doing, it is up in the air. So you've caught me at a particularly bizarre time. And I'm thinking that I could

continue working for another three or four years. I could slow down and do theses stories sporadically on freelance basis until I'm ninety. Or I could just leave it and do anything. Just study fiction writing or something…

But you haven't made up your mind yet?

At this time, I'm feeling that my career, which is now going on for 40 years, is sort of blundering to an end. They say, you know, all newspaper careers end badly, it's only a question of when. So that's the summary of where I'm at.

Okay.

(Zeigt auf ein Poster an seinem Bücherregal) I had that poster up on my desk in a bigger version and Murdoch came in while I was on vacation and he walked right past it. You know what it is? It's Murdoch as a bee because when he first came to the U.S., he bought a newspaper in San Antonio. He kept running this story about killer bees coming up from South America and they were on their way to America where they would sting everybody and kill everybody. And when Murdoch bought New York Magazine in 1977, which he later sold, the New York Review of Books ran this picture by David Levine with a headline that said 'Killer Bee Reaches New York'. So I amended it to say 'Killer Bee Reaches Liberty Street', which is where the Journal is located.

Do you know what he said about it? Or did he just ignore it?

I'm sure he didn't even notice it. But he was there! He walked right past my desk! But I wasn't there, I was in Italy.

I see. But still, would you like to talk about the stories you'd like to write? About your idea, what you think Narrative Journalism is. I don't know which term you prefer, storytelling or whatever. How would you define it? How would you describe it?

I know that my friend Mark Kramer puts this label on it but I'm just a feature writer. That's what it's called, feature writing. It means writing with pictures, with dialogue – it means stories that people get absorbed in not because they are news. And I do them because they existed at the Wall Street Journal when I went there and I was inspired and very happy to do them because the Journal was the only place, even among magazines when I started, that printed that sort of thing. The only thing that was comparable was the 'Talk of the Town' in the New Yorker. And that is basically a more elevated, more sophisticated, more literary version of what I do, on a much more intelligent plane. I wouldn't say I talk down to the reader but I think I have always done stories that were more 'Man Bites Dog'-stories; stories that were curious and amusing and which also allowed you as an individual to see something of your own. The New Yorker mentioned this A-head thing also, and they defined them as stories that are based on originality and wit as opposed to the news of the day. But the trouble is that in the past, even in the relatively recent past, until 2000, it was possible to do this kind of story in some length. 2,500 words, 3,000 words, that's absolutely forbidden now. So I can take… I, for example, did a series called 'Lonely Causes' in 2000. People whose lives were completely wrapped up in things that no one else cared about. And I gave them an opportunity which they could never have, of being listened to. And I went to these people and I sat there and listened to them. I did one on a doctor in New Hampshire who's trying to get the last state in the Union that doesn't have a seatbelt law to pass a seatbelt law. I did a man who is against windmills. I did one on foreskin restoration, which is an effort by men to reverse circumcision. And these stories ran 2,000 or 3,000 words. There's no possibility that they would ever accept that again. And I doubt that there ever will be. That's finished. But that's my ideal, to do the stories that I do. The A-head, when I began 37 years ago, was 1,800 words. Then it became 1,500 words. Now,

it's 1,200 or 1,100 words. The story that I just handed in is 1,347 words long. And they will ask me to take out 147 words. I'm expecting it. I'm praying that maybe they won't but that's ten lines. And it's gonna be hard to do because the story is very tightly written. It takes me weeks to do them. It's an absurdity. The basic job is compression. All I do is squeeze, squeeze, squeeze, make it smaller, smaller, smaller. So I wish that it were possible to take a breath and relax. But my worry is that in today's world, these stories are obsolete.

But do you still get enough time to report and write them?

I think, you know, there's a real… I mean, the Wall Street Journal used to hire people because they could write these stories. They haven't done that in years. The stories are now considered an afterthought, something you squeeze in as an amusement while you're working on something else. And if you're the kind of person that comes to work for a financial newspaper now, you're going to be an MBA or you have a master's in journalism. But you'll be very motivated to write about what I consider to be quite technical subjects. You'll probably be an investigative reporter looking for scandals and you see the business world as a place of great excitement. And you're not going to be interested in writing dopey little stories about, you know, kitty-cats. There's no gain in it for you. You not gonna score any points by doing them. You wanna be on page one with your financial scoop. You don't want to have to share page one with that nonsense. And Murdoch has said that he wants page one of the Journal to be more… what did he say? More urgent. And to be full of breaking news. My vision of the Journal, and my vision of the role of newspapers in the future, is the opposite: to accept that breaking news is something that you will already know about because you read it on the internet yesterday. And the newspaper, if it's going to survive at all, has to give you something that you didn't see on the internet yesterday, something different. What – that's another question. What do you put in a newspaper? Why do you even need a newspaper? You know.

I guess that's a good question…

You could put in magazine-type stories but how many people wanna read that? How many people wanna read that? The New York Times is going to the same insanity. Today, oddly enough, the New York Times has nothing but news on page one, but there are days when they have 5,000 word stories that you are expected to read when? On the subway on your way to work? What about the rest of the damn thing?

So you don't even think that… I mean, why would you say the kinds of stories that you're writing, why should they be in the newspaper?

Well, why should they be in the newspaper?

Yeah, what's your idea about that?

I can only think about why I was so attracted to the newspaper when I first saw them. And that's because they made me happy. When you're hit with a million words every morning, it's worth it to have something that makes you feel good. And that's what these things do. I consider them to be pretty and amusing and relaxing. But they aren't shocking. They aren't necessarily new. I have this line in my mind that I've never used, but the page one editor once did this little recording about what he wanted in stories. And he said he wanted them to be compelling, surprising and new. And I thought, it came to my mind, what I would like are stories that are beautiful, lasting and true. Stories that can be republished years later and still be readable. And I'm very happy that last year, there was a story of mine republished in a book that I wrote in 1974. It's still worth reading. And how many stories that appear in newspapers can you say that about, you know? So I don't think that everything in a newspaper has to be shocking, has to make you feel like what an

idiot you are for not knowing that already. And 'oh, aren't you scared?' or 'oh, aren't you ashamed that everybody knows it but you?'. But, you know, we're talking about a financial crisis and desperation to make people want to read things. And the best way to make people want to read them is to scare them into thinking that they must know this now. I have a big problem with that. I mean, I write these stories because I imagine that they are fun to read. My objective is to make people forget that they're reading and to see pictures. But I'm very depressed about the idea that this is passé. And, you know, things change, the world changes. There are many wonderful magazines which run much better articles than I write. I would love to write for these magazines but I don't.

Which ones are you thinking of?

Well, the New Yorker. I mean, the United States is fantastically different than other Anglo-Saxon countries, you know, and what I know is French and what you say in Germany – I used to read translations when I was covering Poland of the Polish press even under communism, and Russian press, and they have a wonderful style all of their own of a kind of personal journalism which is fun to read. It's not rigorously accurate or anything like that but it's great fun to read. But the United States is blessed with all these magazines. We have everything from the New Yorker, Harper's, Atlantic and Vanity Fair and things like Outside Magazine and GQ and New York Magazine and Texas Monthly and I did something for American Scholar once, which was edited by a really good journalist. It's out there. It doesn't have to be in newspapers. I don't like these… I mean, I'd rather have these stories in magazines, anyway. Because, I mean, when you put them in newspapers, what are they? What is a 5,000 word story doing in a newspaper? Sometimes, there are investigative stories but they're written as very stilted versions of magazine stories. You can't use the first person, you can't be relaxed, there's a kind of haiku about it, a kind of very rigid structure. You can't express an opinion because then… You can't even interpret things anymore, nor have a point of view anymore. The Journal used to have a point of view, you could develop an argument. Now, that's forbidden. So, you know, it's a question of sort of explosive exposés and somewhat tried and boring stories about, you know, victims of this or that. Medical victims, immigration victims, war victims, poverty victims, racism victims and all this sort of bleeding heart stuff which is sort of tiresome. I agree with it politically but it's tiresome. I'm tired of reading that stuff. You know, so I think that when I retire, I might not read a newspaper anymore.

It's interesting because many of the people I talked to so far, or what people write about this, everybody is kind of saying that this type of writing might save newspapers.

Well, but then how do you explain Rupert Murdoch who spends 5.6 billion dollars to buy the Wall Street Journal and then says 'I don't like this stuff'. I mean, it would have been great, if he'd said the opposite but he didn't. And the Journal is not thinking about that. And I don't think other newspapers are thinking that hard about it. Let's face it, in the United States today, there are basically three major newspapers: the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, and the Washington Post. The Los Angeles Times has been destroyed, or is in the process of being destroyed. And then you have a large number of second-ranking newspapers that have local markets and in a way, it's a kind of advantage that they give people something they couldn't get anywhere else because it's about their own local world. So, in that sense, maybe that kind of journalism can flourish more second-level market, kind of local market, with good standards. But for national market, I'm not sure if that kind of writing, if it's not investigative and it isn't exposé, really can save a newspaper. Because the readers are going to read similar stories in magazines; and the focus of the newspapers, and you can see it in the New York Times now and in the Journal, is, you know, they don't want reporters to spend their lives doing this stuff. Nobody ever talks to me about it! They want me to do video. They are worried about can I use a video camera. I don't want to use a video camera. I don't want to do narration for a…

Do you also do podcasts?

I don't even know what a podcast is. Something like radio?

Yeah, something you can download onto your ipod. I think the New York Times, they do that.

No. But I've had stories in the Journal where I have taken pictures… I'm really proud of myself, I did this story about a shepherd and this picture that I took, was on page one of the Wall Street Journal. I'm just as proud of that picture as I was of the story, which was screwed up by the editors. And then they ran a video but what happens is they take your story and they take pictures and on the website, there's a series of pictures, like a comic strip and each picture has a paragraph underneath it and you read the pictures and the paragraphs underneath them and you get the whole story. But it's not your writing, it's somebody who's writing captions for the pictures. So, this story that I just did which is about the subway in New York, I said I can't take these pictures because I'm not skilled as a photographer to take close-up pictures and crowd scenes. So they sent a photographer. And tomorrow, I have to help someone write captions for the pictures. And when people go to the website, instead of reading the story, they can click on the graphics, the presentation, and look at the pictures and read the captions and they won't have to read the story. So I find that horrible and offensive because the beauty of the Wall Street Journal was we never had photography. It was like, you know, Süddeutsche Zeitung, no pictures.

No, that's the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

Or the Allgemeine. No pictures. What's the one in Switzerland?

Neue Zürcher Zeitung maybe?

Maybe. That, to me, is beautiful. It's a lovely newspaper, it's full of stuff to read and that's what the Wall Street Journal used to be like, originally. No pictures, just words. They said 'we leave the color for the writing, we're proud of it'. Now, these kids who pick up the newspaper who don't have the time or the inclination to read the story can read something like a comic strip. It's like a comic book. So I find it sad. Your idea that these kinds of stories will save newspapers, I can't agree with that.

Well, it's not my idea…

But people told you. I would take that with a large grain of salt, with doubt.

I mean, the thing is, you can't really tell. What those people base it upon is that they get so many readers calling in and saying 'I loved your story, it was great' or 'I waited for the next part of it in the morning' and these kinds of things.

That's great, if you can believe that. But I think you're dealing with a different kind of… I mean, the Wall Street Journal is not typical of American journalism. And it's my fault and my personal failing that I work there, that I don't work for, you know, the Seattle Intelligence or the Portland whatever it is, you know. I don't work for those papers. I'm just a guy who took advantage of working for a big newspaper to be a foreign correspondent. You know, I had a great life, I've written stories from more than 60 countries. I had a nice, big account. I could hire interpreters and chauffeurs, I had unlimited airfare and stayed in fairly nice hotels, you know, didn't have to go to war zones that much, didn't have to live in awful places that much and I could always get out of them when I had the chance, when I finished my work. It was much, much more exciting and rewarding than working for a

small metropolitan newspaper. So I do think it might be valid to make a distinction there, between the big national publications and the respectable, responsible, mid-level newspapers that find that they can serve this market, their personal markets, with this kind of journalism and keep readers that way. I don't know. I'm not sure. I'm just guessing. *Yeah, it could be. You can't really tell if this is what readers want to read or if they don't want to read newspapers anymore anyway.*

Maybe you could… You know a lot more about this than I do but one thing that I picked up at this conference was that Spiegel had the most popular website in Germany. And what I thought was they know how to do a magazine. They do a very good magazine, probably one of the best magazines in the world. And it's easy for them to throw up a website because a website is basically a lot of short stuff, you know, up-to-the-minute stuff they can take it of the wire service, they can put their own things in. They can put in pictures of services. And it's a lot easier to do a website than it is to do a magazine. But it seems to me, that's just my opinion, that, as a reader, I would prefer to have a website that I read every day and a magazine that comes once a week. I would feel informed. I don't need a million words a day. I don't have time for this. It drives me crazy. I have a pile, I can't take it anymore. It's too much. But for a magazine, you know, like the New Yorker or the Economist, Time or Newsweek, to put together a daily website… Or even say CNN to do a television station, a website and a magazine and… You know, maybe Murdoch is right. You can take a lot of these stories that are too hard to read during the week and sweep them into a magazine that comes out once a week. And then, on Saturday morning, you get your magazine and you read, you know, you have two or three long investigative stories and a couple of these light stories and you have a lot of personal finance and, you know, how to spend it, and travel and literature, movie reviews, fashion and so forth. And you have a magazine that you can read once a week. But my feeling right now is that there's just too much. I went to Europe for two weeks, didn't read anything except Le Monde, and I read the Guardian when I was in London, which I liked very much, really impressed by the Guardian. And I come home and there's all this information that I don't want to know. I wanna read novels. I have ten books there about immigration that I haven't read. Why do I have to read these articles every day?

Oh, maybe because some of them are good, and make you feel good. I don't know.

But there are just too many of them. It's hard to find the good ones. There's no reliability. One thing that I used to feel about the Wall Street Journal was that, like the New Yorker, you could trust it to give you a good read all the way through. I don't think you could do that anymore. I think they promise more than they deliver. I think it is shoddy. It's what I call flash journalism. It's like a failed effort in sensationalism. It's like women's magazines: 'Ten things your hairdresser won't tell you', '15 ways to lose your cellulite in the summer', you know. It never works. It never works.

And you think the Wall Street Journal is doing the same thing?

Yes. Because the Wall Street Journal has too many headlines that start with the word 'how', 'why' or 'behind', which is a typical ploy to tell readers that they got something you didn't know. You can find it everywhere. You can do it for every headline. You just put 'how', 'behind' or 'why' in front of any headline and it sounds better. The Journal does that all the time, way too much.

Do you also feel… I don't know if that also applies to the Wall Street Journal, but other people told me that there were immense cuts in the newsroom and they had less people working there, less time for the stories they did, and less space for the stories they did. Is that also true for the Journal?

Certainly for space. You know, the paper shrunk physically.

When was that?

It's happening all the time. Oh, you mean the actual size of it. Well, just a couple of months ago. They made the paper very small. It used to be huge. They put ads on the front page, that never happened before. I mean, this is a Saturday paper. They only started this a year ago. There was no Saturday paper. They're desperate for ads. But they, I mean, the Journal had lay-offs but they recently have not been laying people off. I don't know what's gonna happen with Murdoch. He's announced that he expects to have 100 million dollars in savings from 'low-hanging fruit' soon. What he means by that, I don't know. It could be my job. But there haven't been major lay-offs at the Journal. They've added sections, but the sections that they've added have been life style reporters – people who are doing stuff that I don't think of as journalism. They're just advertising vehicles. To me, personally, the problem is that they don't hire people because they are good writers. They hire people because they have MBAs, they know a lot about real estate, they know all about mergers and acquisitions. It's probably more frequent overseas that people who are generalists tend to find a place. I mean, that's why I survived for such a long time because I was overseas. I'm a generalist, I don't specialize in anything. I don't have a technical knowledge in anything. That's what journalists used to be but I'm old-fashioned.

Another thing I wanted to ask is that you mentioned in the beginning that you are no longer able to write stories with a personal voice. First of all, how would you describe it? What is a personal voice in writing? And what do you think, why can't you use it anymore?

Well, I still think I have a voice. I do. I forced it on them. But it's often squelched after an argument, more so than in the past. You almost never see a first person story anymore in this newspaper.

And that used to be different?

Yeah, you could write first person stories on occasion, not on a regular basis but on occasion. The impressionistic story is less acceptable. I'm not even sure… The story I just handed in is somewhat impressionistic. They might kill it. I have no idea. I just don't know. It's frequently the case that the stories are edited to be more conventional and to fit into a much more tried, common notion of a news story. And my feeling is that if you wanna give people something they don't have anywhere else, you should give them something that's fresh, different and unexpected. But at this newspaper, they do not hire people who see the world that way. All right, this is just one newspaper and it's very different from a lot of others but it still is, you know, one of the three most important papers in the United States. And it's put forth as being the most important, powerful paper in the world. And Murdoch is planning to use it to… I don't know what he's doing. I think he's using it for political… he could well be thinking of using it for political purposes. In which case he's going to kill the thing he bought. He's going to rob it of all its value, its reputation, its credibility, its respectability, its believability. If he begins to manipulate the news, as he has done on television, then he'd be eliminating all the value of his huge expenditure. But he's already, before he has even come to close the deal, the Washington bureau chief has just been replaced this week and the sense is that, as he said, he's going to use the Washington bureau to challenge the New York Times as a national newspaper. And there's already a shake-up in the Washington bureau. The question is: what stories are they gonna write, how are they going to play them and will they be presented as business-friendly or Republican-friendly? It's worrisome, it's worrisome. And it will be a death by a thousand cuts. You won't see, you know, one thing that makes it obvious what's happening. It's going to be really slow.

Do you think this notion is shared by all the people in the newsroom? Are they all worried about it?

Well, I think about half a dozen people have left. Several very good investigative reporters, some of them went to this new Portfolio magazine. And three people, in the course of leaving, have actually gotten phone calls from Murdoch asking them not to leave. Did you read this?

I think I read it somewhere.

And I think that there are people that are nervous about it and they don't like it. But the question is: Where else could they work? I have a family to support – where else do I work? And the problem is, certainly for people ten or 15 years younger than me who grew up on newspapers, there aren't that many other choices. And people below that, younger than that, people your age and up to ten years older than you, say, are much more flexible and more open to the idea of multimedia and doing the videos and doing the voiceovers and being on television. Not thinking of news in terms of type. I think that this is potentially what Murdoch will do, to eliminate the borderlines between types or so-called platforms for conveying stories. So if you're a reporter for the Wall Street Journal, you might be on television and you might be online and you might be in print but you're still going to be a reporter for the Wall Street Journal. It doesn't matter what medium you use, you'll always be working for that publication, and the publication will be everywhere all the time. And that's something that I think the current generation is going to be much more comfortable with. I can't conceive of it because I'm in print. I'm a guy who works with words on paper or on the screen, anyway. But there are many people who fit right in. It's remarkable to me how beautifully capable so many of these people are to do narration of their stories online. I think it has something to do with voicemail machines where people got used to speak on microphones. But I'm not interested in being on television and doing that stuff.

Okay. Thank you.

Telefoninterview mit Ben Montgomery (*St. Petersburg Times*) am 16. August 2007

First of all, I'd really like to ask you about your motivation to start your blog. It's great and I was wondering why you decided to start it?

It seemed like there was something of a void that existed in terms of fresh, current inventory of good storytelling, not just narrative. You know, we post alternative story forms quite often. I think the motivation for me early on was that I always found myself, when I was working on a story or project, I found myself searching for inspiration. I used Nexus obviously, I would read stories from people I liked of the Pulitzer site, Pulitzer Prize winners, just to kind of get the creative juices flowing a bit. And I thought it would be something of a service to people if I kept an updated version of it, to be constantly thinking about, you know, stories. How people shape stories, how people are writing at big papers and at small papers, to start new things in Narrative Journalism and so forth. And I also wanted a place to easily talk shop. Obviously, the internet is great for that because anybody can join the discussion. Just like a virtual break room where you can jump in and catch ideas and get criticism and make each other better.

What about the Nieman Narrative Digest. Did you feel like that was not enough?

I think they started to do this before I started doing mine. I mean it was very useful but pretty soon, I had read everything on there, I think there's maybe half a dozen stories. And it also lacks the form for discussion of the stories, there's just one or two people on the staff at Harvard who are posting things, nobody can really comment and communicate about these stories. That's why I think the blog works well because it serves as an open forum of discussions. If I post something someone doesn't like, they can call it out and point out what they don't like and so forth.

And it seems as if it works quite well. I mean, people are really discussing there.

Yeah. I'm surprised, frankly. I mean, it had very humble beginnings, me just kind of launching into a rant early on about, if we wanna get better, if we want newspapers to remain relevant, it's clear that we have to do something different. And my take on that is we have to give people stories rather than just blobs of information. Think about the information we're giving them and think about how we're going to present it. There must exist, in my mind, a balance between providing information and also entertainment. And I think, at its best, that's what Narrative Journalism does. It gives you everything you need to know about what happened yesterday, on the same time keeping you interested in finding out what happened yesterday. If that makes sense…

So you think that's the essence of Narrative Journalism? In the beginning you said it's not just Narrative Journalism posted there but just good storytelling. So you don't really like the term Narrative Journalism or is it just not broad enough for what you're thinking of?

Well, this isn't original but Narrative Journalism is a little redundant in a way. In journalism, you should have chronology. And therefore, I think saying Narrative Journalism, there's a redundancy. You should be chronological. What happens from point A to point B. At the same time, you should be using a voice. I mean, we got into this habit at some point, during World War I perhaps, maybe even earlier than that, when correspondents were following dispatches by teletype and over vulnerable lines of communication. So it had to get quickly into the core of what was going on, it didn't provide time or … It wasn't seizable to tell a story, for obvious reasons. And they came to the kind of… As newspaper readers expect newspapers to give us the important fact at the very top of the story, the second most important fact in the second paragraph, the third

most important in the third paragraph and so on and so forth. What we're doing is destructing chronology. We're taking things completely out of context in order to build the story, something has to happen, something that people can get through quickly. And they started to think that that's what people are looking for. The problem today is people can get that type of information in million different places. You can get it on the internet, you can get it on the radio, on television. Therefore, we have the opportunity at newspapers to step out of that and provide honest information with really riveting storytelling – complete with character building, the dramatic arc, complete with context and texture and complexity. What we're doing is important right now to the health and stability of newspapers.

So you really think this is the future of newspaper writing?

I think it's the future and I think it was the past. Think of copies of earlier newspapers. The inverted pyramid didn't come around too soon. Check out the cavemen writing on the wall, that was narrative. They were stories, they had a beginning, a middle and an end. The Bible, Beowulf, all these ancient scripts have chronology and order. I think it's the future but I think a hundred years from now we'll sort of view this period of American journalism where people opted for what we know as the inverted pyramid and sort of think 'Oh that's when we were doing it that way.' It's the future but it's also the past, that's what I'm trying to say.

But how do you think does it fit into the whole context of the circulation that is dropping, and there are cuts in the newsroom. All the newspapers seem, as far as I can tell from here, they really have to economise. And Narrative Journalism is quite, I mean, it takes time and it can be rather expensive, so, how do you think does that that fit in?

Well, it takes an understanding by the leadership of newspapers that you can't cut corners in terms of trying to get people into the product because if you cut too many corners, people stop buying your product. And I think that's why newspaper circulation is falling. The newspapers that are retaining readers – this isn't across the board but the St. Petersburg Times for instance has had stable circulation for the past two years and we actually increased the daily circulation a little bit this year over last year and we increased, I think, two and a half percentage points Sunday circulation this year over last year. There are all sorts of reasons for that but I content that it's because this is a newspaper that can afford to – because of its relationship with Poynter Institute and its unique financial structure – it can afford to spend money on storytelling, on doing things right, on giving reporters the time it takes to do narrative and to tell stories. And it takes a lot more time, a lot more effort, it takes smarter people to pull it off, more experience in the field, in reporting and writing. This is a paper that has become to be known for its content. This for good reason: The leadership here gets it, they realise that this is what, you know … if we're gonna charge people a quarter and 50 cents tomorrow for the paper, we gonna give them some stories, we gonna give them depth and context and help them understand their world a little bit better by what we write.

Would you say that, in general, the attitude in your newsroom is that narrative writing is accepted as much as regular newswriting, or is there still some kind of difference between the two types?

There is a difference but there's definitely a tendency across the board for reporters to lean toward narrative. Even in the investigative, sort of hard news stories that we do, the reporters are encouraged, and I'd say 90 percent of them try to incorporate narrative. It might not be a certain narrative structure throughout but you can find narrative elements in most of what we write, especially if the project has the right editors. In this place, the St. Pete Times is a little different than most places because of the relationship with Poynter

Institute and because there's such a focus on good writing here. I think, you know, if you were to survey reporters at ten different newsrooms, the St. Pete Times would probably have the most reporters who have a tendency to practice Narrative Journalism. So it's perceived very well in the newsroom. We have like short workshops, short workshops during the lunch hours, every few weeks we'll bring in storytellers from other newspapers to talk about the craft and to learn, there's lots of learning opportunities for writing and reporting narrative. People here accept it, not just accept it, they like it and they practice it quite often.

Would you say that's different in other newspapers?

Yes. And I speak from experience. I think that in other newspapers, a much smaller percentage of the staff dabbles in doing narrative. And it tends to be a kind of cliquish thing. If you're structuring stories with a beginning, middle and end, a dramatic arc and a climax and so forth, you're probably labelled as like 'a writer' and the hard news people sort of ostracize you a little bit. And it doesn't matter what readers think, it just tends to be like this cliquish thing, there's lots of ego involved. The places I've worked at, the percentage of the staff that tried narrative tends to be much smaller than the percentage that sort of does the telephone reporting and then doubles it all together and turns into the paper.

So you found the right place for you to work in.

I sure did, on purpose. I guess the past three papers I worked at, I had in mind that I was trying to get into the St. Pete Times some day.

Maybe we could also talk about your writing at the St. Petersburg Times. You were saying that people considered you a writer. How would you call yourself: a storyteller, a journalist, a writer?

I think writer sounds a little pretentious, and I try not to take what I do too seriously because no matter how good what we create is, people have the tendency to read it and put it in the box for recycling. But, you know, at the core of Narrative Journalism is hard, shoe-leather reporting and I would probably tend to call myself a reporter before I would a writer or a journalist. I'm just talking to people and trying to tell stories about what they do, what they say.

So the reporting is an important part of the whole narrative process, as I see it.

Oh, absolutely, absolutely. You have to go deeper, you have to report for complexity and context and nuance. Those are things that can't be reported over the telephone. It requires getting dirty and getting in the field, meeting people and hanging out at the bars and at the parks. You can never be a narrative type of person without willing to do the reporting. Part of it has to do with putting yourself in the right place in the right time. Getting so close to a source that the person forgets you're there and acts naturally and allows you to observe their lives and how they live and how they talk. That's a hard thing to do a lot of times, getting close and establishing trust with people. I'd say many times more difficult to do that than it is to make a cold phone call and try to get somebody to deny a claim they're making or whatever.

How do you go about to get that access? Do you just stay there and wait?

Yeah, a big part of it is spending as much time as possible with the person, you know, if you're trying to get close to that person. I give you an example, it's actually posted on the Nieman Narrative site that you mentioned. It was a piece I did at the Times Herald Record

in New York. I'll spare you all the details, it's about a man who's paralysed and he had a seizure and ran over an elderly woman in a parking lot of a church. In order to write this story …. the guy had a great background, he had trainings at one point being a major league baseball player and then he had a hunting accident. And I wanted to get to know the guy and he was pretty cold at first and didn't want to speak to me. But I established a trust with him and kept talking and kept him talking before he knew we had spent three or four hours together the first day that I went by his house. And then I showed up again a few days later and just kept coming back and before long, he was just kind of living while I was there. The last scene in the story is the most dramatic scene I think I've ever witnessed: The police are coming to take the guy's licence away so he can't drive again because he's a danger and he's trying to get his licence back and I witnessed this interaction between him and his kids when they bring his van home from the parking lot and, you know, it's really powerful and I think readers walked away learning something not just about the guy but about themselves and also about society. But it took me going back to his house four or five times and spending multiple hours every time in order to witness that big payoff in the end. So, yeah, it takes trust, it takes being open and letting people know what you're working on and where you're coming from, what it is you're reporting, what it is you're doing and so forth.
Anne Hull, who's a fantastic writer at the Washington Post and who I came to look at as a mentor, reported a series on being gay in rural America.

Yes, I read that series.

Yeah, it's fantastic. You know this story about the kid from Oklahoma? She was hanging out with the young man from Oklahoma for quite a while and she said the first time she was hanging out with him he introduced her to his friends 'Oh, this is Anne Hull from the Washington Post'. And then, as time went on, it became 'This is Anne Hull form the newspaper' and she kept spending time and kept spending time and before long, when his new friends would ask 'Who is that?', he would say 'Oh, that's just Anne'. And she knew then that she had gotten so close to the source that she's no longer kept in the picture, that she was just the proverbial fly-on-the-wall and she could observe from the distance and watch this kid. And that's when those great moments come. You know, it's probably very similar to really good documentary work where people forget the camera is there, and the reporters are there, and they just live.

I see. It's all really interesting. In think most editors at newspapers here in Germany, they would kind of flinch if somebody told them 'Well, I'd like to hang out with this person for a week'. People are not really used to this kind of idea here, which is bad, I think, because we are missing loads of good stories.

Does that kind of journalism exist in magazines there?

Yeah, it does. I mean, it also exists in bigger papers. But especially the smaller newspapers that are struggling would profit a lot from fresh voices and fresh stories. But it's more short stories and information and that's it.

Sure. The kind of reporting I'm referring to and the stuff Anne Hull does is typically called immersion narrative with the reporters being immersed in a situation and reporting. I find myself doing that actually fairly rarely. I mean, I may get into different sorts of situations every day but in terms of spending a long time with one individual doesn't happen that often. But narrative can be done on a daily basis and on daily stories. Actually, the story that I did yesterday – and if you look at tampabay.com, oh and I think it's linked to gangrey, someone linked it this morning – you know, it's a narrative. It gives you the news on top, in a sort of smooth and interesting way, I think, but then, right after the first section, we jump back into where the whole thing began and we build characters and we

go through a dramatic arch and we can walk away with a nice ending. And that was a daily story, you know, it was a shooting that happened early yesterday morning. I got to the scene at about seven and I reported probably six hours, so that brings you at, what, one o'clock? Maybe seven hours. And then I headed back to the office and then I started thinking about the story, about what we had. Then we had a meeting at about five p.m. with all the reporters that were working on it and I sat down and wrote the main bar in probably three hours. You can do it on a daily basis. This takes getting into the habit of thinking about story rather than about … readjusting the way we report and the way we think about what we're going to write.

I guess that's something we should learn here as well. It's really interesting. Actually I'm through with my questions now and I'm sure you've got some work to do.

Yeah, I'm still chasing that story. I've been trying to track down some family members in a very rural part of Florida.

Well, than thank you so much for talking with me.

You're welcome. If you have anything else, give me a ring back or send me an e-mail I'll be glad to answer.

Maybe just one last question: Are there any colleagues you could recommend or texts that I should read?

Sure, yeah. There are a number of people at the St. Pete Times I would recommend. Kelly Benham, she's an editor now, she's recognised pretty much industry-wide for being a fantastic narrative journalist. We have free archives, so you could search her name. Also on staff, who's ironically Kelly's new husband, is Tom French. He's into long form narrative. He's on a project that he's been working on for the last two years. And then some of the people who are doing it in shorter fashion, who are also on gangrey: Michael Kruse is good, Thomas Lake is good, Erin Sullivan, most of the stuff I link to at the blog.
A few at the top of the game are David Finkel of the Washington Post and Anne Hull at the Washington Post. And I really like C.J. Chivers of the New York Times, and those are a few who do stuff regularly that I really like.

All right. Thanks again.

Telefoninterview mit Andrea Gurwitt (*New Jersey Herald News*) am 11.10.2007

Could you, first of all, tell me your exact position at your paper and since when you've been working there?

I'm a feature writer and I've been working here for six years.

Okay. I've got a couple of questions. I'm focusing on Narrative Journalism in my thesis, so my first question would be: How would you describe this kind of journalism?

That's a very good question… Well, I mean… You call it narrative non-fiction?

Well, I decided to call it Narrative Journalism but I know that many people use different names for it, so call it whatever you want to call it.

I mean, I sort of think about it as narrative non-fiction. I think about it as telling a story in the traditional form of a story but with facts. And… I haven't actually thought about it. I went to Columbia Journalism School and I had a fantastic professor named James Kerry, who sadly recently died, but he is well known as a thinker about journalism. And he always started his courses with saying that everyone wants to hear a story. You know, I thought about that a lot, it really is true. Story is sort of the best way to digest information and really feel it. There is a lot of discussion, as I'm sure you know, about when it is appropriate to use narrative non-fiction and when it is not. So, if you have a fire that happened the night before and you're writing for a daily, do you make it a narrative or do you make it a straight news story? And there are lots of different opinions about that. I'm a feature writer, so I don't have to wrestle with that.

Because you don't work on a daily basis?

Right. I don't cover fires and I don't cover town. I cover a beat, which is the work beat. What you read kind of came out of that but it took a different turn. I got to this story because of a work story but then I took it into a different direction. For me, it's not just imparting information, it's asking the reader to come with you – I don't like using the word – journey, to come with you, to read a story in which there's more feeling and storytelling as opposed to straight facts. And it's not just starting with a person, you know, there's a style of starting with a person in order to hook the reader, so you can then tell the reader a lot of information and then, you end with the person but you never weave the person through. It's really just a way to get someone interested. I don't actually think that's so great. You hook the reader and then, where's the person? And then, the reader finds the person in the end and then, it all stops. Now narrative non-fiction is using that person to either show, to exemplify a subject, something like poverty or I don't know, whatever, or it's just that people are inherently interesting to other people. And I think there is a place in newspapers and readers respond to slice of life narration in which people, in which readers can read about other people.

So, would you say that this is the function that narrative can have in a newspaper?

I think the function of Narrative Journalism sometimes is to allow the reader to feel more than the reader can in a straight story. And once you get not just the brain but emotions involved – and I don't mean to be maudlin, I don't mean emotions used in a cheap way. There's more to a story than simply facts, there are emotional facts and psychological facts and lots of facts that have a place within the story but that are not necessarily given a place within a story. And the approach of narrative non-fiction allows all other ingredients to be used.

I see. And what would you say, what kinds of topics lend themselves for a narrative approach?

I don't know.

Would you say any kind of topic?

No. I was going to say any topic but then I thought 'well, that's probably not any topic'. I don't think that narrative non-fiction should be used all the time, I really don't. I think there's a place for it, and there are times when it should be used. It's just as important to think about when you use it as whether you use it.

You know, my impression after looking at a lot of texts on the Nieman site was that many narratives tell some kind of story about a personal blow of fate, or about an illness or accidents and these kinds of things. So, there's often some kind of drama involved.

Well, let me see… The common approach is that it has a fiction structure. So on the Nieman site those stories that you're reading are that 'What is the obstacle? How is it overcome?', you know, that kind of thing. And I think, obviously, that's absolutely right but I'm wondering if that's the only time to use it. You know, I just really don't think about it, I just sort of do it or I don't. I feel my way through. My soldier story, it was not traditional narrative because I had this, you know, he is part of a much bigger story, as is his wife. And one reason I wanted to be sure to write it was because I thought that this stuff was not getting a lot of attention in the press. And then, there's a whole story to them, too, that people don't get to read about. But it wasn't so much the obstacle but more about the situation. And in that way, it is not traditional narrative. The thing about narrative non-fiction in the U.S. is that, you know, many times, reporters have to fight to get it in their paper. And then, readers respond. But it's not a coherent movement. It's not like, you know, the Danish cinema 'Dogma', it's not that coherent, you know, like it's thought up by some people, and now we're going to push it. It's just sort of piecemeal, and reporters catch wind of it and then think 'Wow, that'd be great, I should try that'. And then they go along. You have to sort of adapt to what paper you're on. So it's not like, you know, the New Yorker magazine or Atlantic Monthly. For newspapers, it's funny… I'm sorry. The publications that are so specific to their readers, to their whole niche, and they're so different from location to location as opposed to national magazines. You know, they have their way of being and you write to fit that way. So, all this to say is that 'Who knows what really works for narrative non-fiction in newspapers?'. It's different in every state, it's different for every newspaper and it's different for every reporter. And there's something very exciting about that. Because you can approach it the way that you see is best while learning from your peers who are doing amazing work, all over the country. But you don't feel constrained in one way. And that lends a lot of creativity to it.

The story you were already talking about, the one on the Nieman website – I wanted to ask you about the reporting process for that. How long did it take you to report that piece?

I followed them for six months. And I must say that I'm incredibly lucky to work for a paper that allows me to do that. I didn't follow them exclusively for six months, I mean I wrote other articles but I was given a lot of time to just go hang out with them whenever I wanted.

Was that an exception for you or have you done that several times?

I did it before. I followed someone for two years before.

So you get the time to do that?

Yeah.

This is interesting because some of the journalists I talked to, they said it's getting harder and harder to do that and to get that much time to spend on the reporting.

Yes, we're incredibly lucky here. You know, all newspapers are feeling the squeeze, unfortunately. And time is at a premium. But still, at my paper, there is a recognition for the importance of storytelling. And every effort is made to give reporters time when they need it.

That's another thing I wanted to ask about, the attitudes towards storytelling. How do you think it's perceived in the newsroom?

Oh, you mean that hard news reporters sometime think it's silly?

Yes, basically, that's the question.

It's not seen that way here. You know, these stories are oftentimes tied to hard news events. They are not fluffy, they are serious. The one I followed the guy for two years was about immigration. The area that my paper covers has a huge immigrant population, so immigration is very important to readers. And so, that was considered important for the paper. So, no, other reporters – I mean, yes, there's a natural division between feature side and city side because the one side is given more time, the other side has to write incredible amounts of news all the time. But both are respected here.

And this not only applies to the reporters but also to the editors?

Yes.

So both have the same level of acceptance?

Yeah, I think so.

Okay, so coming back to your reporting process: Did you reconstruct some of the scenes you were writing about or did you witness all of it?

You know, I meant to read it again… I had to get a story in today, so I didn't have time. But yeah, some was reconstructed; I did not witness all of it. When I reconstructed it, I asked both the husband and the wife separately, so I could get their accounts. And I asked also the children, like for the opening scene, I asked the kids, too. I did witness when he was interviewed by the psychiatrist and I was there for the birthday party. I was there for a lot of it but not all of it.

Have you thought about… You know, some journalists have thought about how they could prove to the readers that what they're writing is not made up, basically. So they decided to either put a little box at the bottom or they insert it into the story and use things like 'as he remembers, as she remembers'. Have you thought about that as well?

I have thought about putting in 'as he remembers' and 'as she remembers' but I think it's something to avoid when you can. But I also think there's a place for it, you know, and I can't make a blanket statement. I think there are stories that need it, and there are other stories that you can reconstruct through extensive interviews and a lot of time. You know, I didn't just ask them to tell me their stories once, I asked them several times over the time

I was following them to see if the story changed – which it didn't. So, you should do the best you can. If there's something that you think is suspect, then you… I think you start, if you spend enough time with people, they know you and you know them and you start to, your reporting sense goes in a sort of hyper-drive and you begin to sense when they may be lying and when they're not. It takes a while. So I think reporters have to be good at sensing when they need to put in a 'he remembers, she remembers`. And not that this means that the people are lying but that they might not be able to remember it. But I do also agree with the explanatory-note-approach.

But you didn't do that for this particular article? Or maybe I just couldn't see it because it was online, I don't know.

Right, yeah, it's not there. We had written something up, we had written up a box but the box was not there…. There is also another debate, I don't know if you heard about it, if those boxes, those explanatory boxes, if they need to be there because readers should assume that what's in the paper is the truth, that the reporter has been diligent to report the truth.

Oh, I think I read something about that… You said you followed those people for six months, and I was wondering how hard it was for you to get so close to them and for them to open up to you.

Well, they were very generous about giving me access. I met the wife, Jovannie, on another story. She was telling me about her husband and I would see there was a lot there. So I asked her if she could ask her husband if it was okay to write about them. They both agreed that it would be okay because they didn't want other couples to go through the same thing. So they, from the beginning, were very cooperative. It's hard. It's hard because as much as you explain to them that this means you're going to be there all time. It's hard to know exactly what that means until you're dealing with the reporter who is there all the time. You know, as a reporter, what you wanted for them was to literally forget you were there. And that means doing a lot of sitting still and a lot of listening and a lot of attempting to melt into the background. That means that the family has to allow you to be there. And Jovannie and her husband really were okay with me being around. It's difficult because he was sick, he was very sick, but still, he always said okay, he never said no. So I was very lucky. And a lot of it is about trust. Sources need to know they can trust you. And there's no real way to prove it other than the way you are with them. And to really listen to what they are saying. And so, slowly, slowly, that trust builds. That it not to say, I mean, trust does not mean that you only write the good things. It is not a friendship. It's a reporter-source-relationship. That should never be confused.

After you've finished reporting, do you tell your sources what you're going to write?

I tell them that I'm working to write a story. I don't tell them what I'm going to include or not. You can't. I mean, it's really unethical to do that. I don't show them anything. And that's a huge trust on their part, for them to say 'okay, I'll let you look on everything that matters in my family or in my life'. And I think non-fiction narrative reporters really appreciate their sources in a way… You really get to appreciate the generosity of people.

In that story about the soldier, there are some bits that I guess you wouldn't want to read about yourself in a newspaper, for example when he fights with his wife and these kinds of things. Was that a problem afterwards? Did you talk to them about it?

They were fine with it. Let me tell you what I discovered over the years. If you really do your work and get to understand people as best as you can – and of course, you never can fully understand them – and I keep saying listening because it really is important, and then

you don't over-dramatize and you treat their stories respectfully, and the facts respectfully, people don't mind when these things are getting into the paper. People worry that you're going to misrepresent them. If you represent them as truthfully as you can, they accept that. And so, the Villabol family was actually happy with the story. I tell you, I was a little worried about the fighting scene, I wondered if it was going to upset them but it didn't.

Okay. Something else I'd like to talk about is the writing process. How much attention do you pay to the language you use?

I think a lot about language. It's very important in stories, even in straight news stories word choice is important. And I think that language is another component. You have your facts, which hopefully will be right, and how do you convey those facts – it's through language. It's incredibly important. And yes, I do think about it. And I think language changes for each story. Each story is a – ach, this is gonna sound so stupid, but if you think of it not as a story but as music, you know, you use different notes and different beats for music. And you do the same thing for narrative non-fiction.

So you try to make the language fit to the story?

Yeah – and no. I said I think about it but I try not to think too much about it because it can get very stilted.

And what's your opinion on the use of first person in this kind of writing?

I don't have an opinion. It works, and sometimes it doesn't. And you just have to try it, if you wanna use it – and I tend not to but only because that's me. I know it can be used incredibly effectively. So it's really just personal – whatever works.

It's interesting to hear you say 'it depends' because some of the people I talked to had really strong opinions about it, either loving it or hating it.

Yes, people do. And I just think you can read… You know David Finkel?

Yeah, I talked to him, actually.

He's brilliant; I just think he's unbelievingly brilliant. He doesn't use first person. He's someone who could absolutely use first person, it would be astonishingly beautiful. But he doesn't. And then, there are others who do. What's his opinion on first person?

He doesn't like it. I think he said that it's been done so many times in magazines and that he's kind of tired of it. And he said he's not interested in the reporter but in the story.

It's really personal. I mean, it's like saying what sort of ice-cream you like. He is so incredible…

I was really lucky that I got to talk with him. He's in Iraq right now, but he was back in Washington for just one week and I was lucky enough to catch him in that week.

Yeah, that is lucky.

Okay. We're almost through, just a couple more questions. Well, we've talked about the attitudes in the newsroom and I wanted to ask about your relationship to your editor. Is it difficult for you to sell narrative texts to your editor?

I have to tell you that I am incredibly lucky to have the editor I do. She was a reporter herself and a really beautiful writer. And she has always encouraged being experimental, trying different styles and different approaches to stories. She never says something isn't going to work. She says 'try it'. She's just incredibly encouraging and I owe her a lot. So no, I never had that kind of problem.

And what about the readers' reactions to these pieces?

The readers respond, you know. They really respond. We see it here at a small paper, and you see it at the big papers. I get the most reader responses from these narrative non-fiction stories.

You said the paper you're working for is rather small. Are you the only person who does this kind of storytelling or are there more people who do it?

We have six feature writers, five or six – which is a lot for a paper of our size. I've been here the longest. Other people have definitely done it. There was a time when three of us were writing like this and it was great, and readers really responded to it. And it's very exciting when you have several colleagues doing the same work because then you really get each other's excitement.

And what would you say is the tendency in general in your newsroom – is there more or less texts like this?

Less. Fewer.

And what are the reasons for this?

I mean, some of it is time, and people. And some stories lend themselves to that kind of writing and some really just don't. Narrative non-fiction takes a lot of work. I'm not saying the other stories take less. But it's different. With narrative non-fiction, you really have to immerse yourself in someone else's life. And that's a big commitment.

At your paper, can you also feel that it's not possible to do that all the time because of the amount of time, because of the need to economise?

Well, you know, in the feature section, we have to write at least one story a week. So that doesn't mean you can't work on one, two, three, four stories at a time. It's whatever you wanna do. And when you need the time you're given, you get away from producing one story a week. And even that is not… It's not that anyone is saying anything; it's that these sorts of stories, these immersion stories, take a lot of your own time. You do have a commitment because you're writing other stuff. And as I said in the beginning, not all stories should be, I don't think all stories should be narrative non-fiction. Some should be and some just don't seem to work. But we get no pressure to do anything. We're really allowed to write what we wanna write.

Is that also true for the length of the stories you are writing? Has the space you are getting changed?

Yes, sometimes. But, in general, we're given a lot more space than at other papers.

Yeah, because that's another thing that some of the people I've been talking to have complained about, that they are getting less and less space for their stories.

I mean, they actually do get less and less space. When they used to have 50 inches, they're now given 25 inches. I know that, it's brutal to go through. It hasn't happened with us yet. I mean, we used to be able to routinely write a 100-inch-story. That's not the case any more. But we're not stuck at 25 inches. We can still write much longer than that.

I see. Well, you've already said that you're not one of those people who believe that everything should be done in a narrative way. You know, some people think that this is the way to save newspapers. What's your idea on the future of this kind of writing? Where does it fit in, also considering the internet?

Honestly, I don't know. I think there will always be a place for hard news stories. I think and I hope that readers won't want hard news stories. They are incredibly important and there is a reason that they're there. I also think that narrative will remain. But I don't know how. I don't even know how to answer that question. No one really knows what's happening right now, everything's so much in flux. We just don't know. I just have no clear idea. We just have to hope that newspapers are around. You know, I truly feel it's an honour to do it, I mean narrative non-fiction. I do. And I'm just always honoured when people allow you to be an integral part of their life and just watch them, you know.

Yeah, you're right. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me.

Telefoninterview mit Tom Zuppa, (*Lowell Sun*) am 3. Oktober 2007

Please tell me your exact position at the Sun and since when you've been working there.

My job title is managing editor and I have been here for twelve years.

Okay. And how would you describe Narrative Journalism? What is it for you?

Narrative Journalism goes back probably thousands of years, it's just a new form of storytelling, much in the same way that people would sit around fires – when they first discovered fires, they would tell stories. It's just a more modern version of storytelling with a fancier name.

And how would you try to differentiate it from other kinds of journalism? Do you see any differences?

Absolutely. A lot of journalism is reports. Such and such happened in a particular time or, you know, we're covering the congressional race right now, so we're covering debates. I mean, these are reports of what happened and, you know, with that comes a lot of analysis, computer-assisted reporting and those types of things. Narrative Journalism really touches more on the human emotion to me. So it's about people as opposed to issues or concepts or things. Here's a person who's overcome an obstacle or here's a person behind a cause and why they are… I think it's a little different to the traditional news feature, partly in the tone that it takes and partly in the need for Narrative Journalism to have a dramatic arc. There has to be drama in the story at some point. There has to be a reason for you to care about these people so that you continue to read on. You wanna find out what the conclusion might be. And I think that's unique. There's a beginning, middle and an ending to it and there's drama to it. If it was a story about, I don't know, somebody organizing a fund-raising walk, for example, it might not be a lot of drama in it, whereas there might be a lot of drama in someone working to save their farm, or a young child who wants to be adopted. There's drama inherent in those stories. That's really a key component of narrative.

What would you say, then, what kinds of topics lend themselves for a narrative approach?

I think any time people are facing obstacles, those are always natural types of narratives. They can be large obstacles or small. Often, types of medical features tend to become narrative pieces because they have natural ability. But I'll give you an example of a narrative that we did a couple of weeks ago. We did a story about a family farm, and they grew apples. They've been doing it for 50 years and now they're in their late 70s or 80 and they're thinking 'This might me the last year for the farm'. So, it certainly had this sort of dramatic what's-gonna-happen-to-the-farm kind of thing, which is not answered, because they haven't figured that out yet. But the struggle of, you know, here are these people who met during the war, he was a soldier, and then they've made their lives and now – what's gonna happen? What's gonna happen to them, what's gonna happen to their farm? That really kind of lends itself to that kind of storytelling. A lot of things don't, certainly those report types of stories. Anything that spins around people and feeling and actions really lends itself to narrative.

I see. And what do you think, which functions can Narrative Journalism have in the daily newspaper?

People like to see themselves. People like to see their neighbors and friends. People need to see others in similar situations and people like to see happy endings – a lot of times.

Not all narrative ends happily. But I think people get wrapped up in a story. It's like someone reading a novel, almost. People would read a novel because 'Oh, there's going to be some twist or turn along the way that's going to see me to the end and I'm interested in the topic of the story'. Narrative serves that same function but it's based in real life. It can be ten minutes of escape for someone. Or, you know, in the example of medical narrative, that would be something where people could see themselves. Maybe somebody is trying to overcome an addiction, people with addictions of all types could learn from that. And they relate to that. A sympathetic character is very attractive to people, as well. Is that making any sense at all?

Yeah, it's perfectly clear. Another thing you already mentioned is that what makes narrative different from a normal news feature is its tone. Could you explain what you mean by that?

I think the tone of the writing tends to be up-close and personal as opposed to – if you're writing a story about a government report or you're writing about the city council, you use a specific style of language. Not necessarily using the terms but it's going to have a technical understanding, whereas if you do narrative, your words tend to be very up-close and personal. The writing tends to be very personal. Sometimes, you'll have people break down the wall between the reader and the writer, sort of impartial. Sometimes, you know, you can say 'the room was very warm' and you don't need to attribute it to anybody. You were there, it's experiential. If you're writing a story, say, about raising taxes on cigarettes, that's a technical thing, you get away with calling them cigarettes. If you're writing about someone's memory of their father, and they always remember their father smoking, what makes it narrative and personal is: What kind of brand did he smoke? Or maybe, where has he smoked and how he smoked. Those types of things that would not be at all in place in a report but in a story, would be visual. I raised that to a reporter because my father was a smoker and I know what he smoked, so that would be… Even though it might not be the same brand as the person they're writing about, it would be like 'Oh yes, I had that experience, too'. And then we know what this person is going through.

So you would say that tone comes with certain details that you include?

Absolutely. It's not enough to describe someone, you have to see them doing something, you know, bending over, the way they handle things. It's extremely descriptive.

What also comes in there is the use of first person in narratives. What's your idea on that? What could the first person contribute?

I think there's times, when people bring in their own experiences… I think writing in first person, often times it's more of an essay, what I wouldn't consider narrative, even though it has narrative qualities. So I'd maybe differentiate it a little from first-person essay. Often times, I will see features writers who will step away from this narrative into 'Okay, this is what I was feeling' and I think sometimes it can be very useful, sometimes it can be very distracting. I'd rather not know the writer is there because it almost serves as a filter or buffer. I'm not a huge fan of it but I can see where first person has application, sometimes.

But you as an editor, would you rather encourage your reporters to write something like 'as he said to a reporter'?

Oh, that depends from editor to editor. I'm not a big fan of it, in a narrative sense. Narrative should transport you into a place. So if Julia is reading the story, and Julia feels like she's in the middle of this scene and she's been brought along, all of a sudden, there's another person in the room and it's the reporter. I mean, I can see the application but

sometimes, it's very distracting. That's a matter of taste, there's certainly no one way to do this.

Another thing I'd like to talk about is the attitudes towards this type of writing in the newsroom. How is it perceived in your newspaper? How is it appreciated, or how is it not appreciated?

I think there's a very wide gulf in here regarding the importance of narrative. I think there are some editors who understand what we're trying to do when we do a narrative. And there are some who just… It's not in their knowledge or training or understanding of a story. And it can be difficult sometimes to tell them: 'No. I understand that you're viewing this as a traditional news story but we're going to do something different, and here is why' and you have to explain that. I think that's editors level. At the reporter level, it is just really outside a lot of people's comfort zone. They're trained to be objective. They're trained to be dispassionate. And there's sometimes that, you know, if you push them toward it, it is a very difficult transition. I have probably two people on staff I trust with narrative, personally. And there's a couple of people that I, from time to time, push to try, you know, 'Let's just try it this way', understanding that it's not gonna be as good as the best person on the staff but it's a start. You get more comfortable with this as times goes on. So when these opportunities crop up, you're gonna be able to manage them. I think narrative still tends to be editor-driven because either reporters are too young and are still learning to basic stuff, and some of the older reporters have never been pushed to take a chance and it's just really outside their comfort zone. It's a learning experience. When you see other newspapers doing it, it's an encouragement. You can say: 'Here's another example of a great story. It can be done.' So we're looking for the opportunities. I talk to other editors who say: 'You should have one every day.' And that's not always possible.

So you wouldn't say that it has the same level of acceptance as regular newswriting?

Absolutely not. It's not the same and it's kind of a niche, still.

So you are the one who's trying to make the newspaper embrace it?

Yes. But let me explain this. I'm the editor who's probably the most passionate about it. That doesn't mean my superiors aren't. But they're looking to me as the one to champion it in the newsroom. I mean, they are very supportive of me. A lot of these opportunities have fallen into my lap, which is great.

Is it difficult for you to sell it to your superiors, to say 'I want to do this story in that way'?

No, I don't have a problem selling it. I mean, if I say to them 'I think this is a really great idea, we should do this', they're not the ones to say to me 'try this or try that'. And my job, I'm sort of the person who has to champion it with the reporters. And then, help them to navigate through some of the line-editors on my level.

Do you have enough financial resources and enough time for your reporters to do this kind of writing?

There's always too much to do and not enough people to do it – in the whole world.

That was the diplomatic answer to that question, I guess…

It sure was. I'll give you the specific answer. I think you can make time to do these things, personally. What it requires is, because time is finite and resources are finite, you have to give up some other stuff. And I'll quote somebody else, I heard a speaker a couple of

years ago who said that you have to give up good to be great. So you gotta be willing to sacrifice some good stories to have a great story. When I'm giving these stories to my reporters, they're trying to manage their time. I'd say: 'This other thing that you're working on, make it short. Take those two or three extra hours and put them into this story because this is the story I want to shine.' All these stories, they're all the same, there's nothing distinguishing one from another. So we're gonna give up a little on this story and a little bit on that story and make this one thing really shine. And that's not always something that is embraced in the newsroom, either. We have different tastes in stories. But that's one way to get to the point of doing it. If you don't have a full-time narrative writer, and most newspapers don't, we've got to find it within our staff.

And have you ever had stories that had to be reported for a really long time, over several months or longer?

Well, let me tell you about, I think, the first experience I had with long-scale narrative. It was in 2001. I was assigned with a reporter to do something about hospice. And what we wanted to describe was the final experience of hospice. We had a reporter and a photographer who followed a family through hospice for three months, a husband and wife, a couple. They spent three months plus following the family and then spent another two months writing the story. So it was about six months from the idea coming up to actually getting in the paper. And that is long but it's not long by some other standards. There are papers that spent more than a year on a project. So, hopefully… We don't have a lot of instances where we're spending six months on narratives any more. We're trying to do them a little shorter. This was actually about 9.500 words, so it was a long one.

Has that also to do with cuts in the newsrooms and less space in the paper? I mean, in many papers the pages shrunk physically. How does that influence your paper and your work?

I think it influences us in a couple of ways. One is, we do have fewer people to do the work. The work you have to do becomes far more important in a lot of people's case. We don't want to give up something, say 'We don't wanna do that anymore. We're not gonna cover this story.' People get comfortable in their ways, and we don't want to give up and go off in a new direction. I don't think narrative is really new, like I said. It's something that is only starting to come back into daily newspapers after a long time. Say to somebody: 'Okay, you gonna have a month to go report and write this story.' A month of reporting, you don't have the reporter anymore. And that can be really crippling in a newsroom. You know, it's not one of the largest newsrooms in the country. I'm not sure if we would be able to do that story we did six years ago the same way as we did, if we had to do it today. We'd still do it but our time would be more limited, you know, there'd be other things that would have to be melded in as well. It becomes a great challenge. Because to me – this is me, this is my sensibility – ,I think more people are gonna read that hospice story, and they're gonna follow it for four or five days, than gonna read the city council meeting story.

Is that also your experience with readers' reactions? What kinds of readers' reactions do you get for those stories?

I think people, when they react, you get lot… People are not willing to pick up the phone or send an e-mail to say 'I loved this story. It was great.' They are far more likely to call and say 'I didn't like this story'. But going back to the hospice story, that got such response, unlike anything I had ever been involved in. And that really cemented me to be interested in this as a field because people generally loved it. Some people didn't like it, they thought it was kind of a downer subject and, you know, thought we invaded the family's privacy – which we didn't. But it was just a lot of people who got into the story

and looked forward to reading it every day for four or five days. People looked forward to pick up the paper the next day and that's a huge deal.

Yeah, I guess that's what you want. You've already talked about the differences between 2001 and today. What would you say is the tendency in your newsroom, do you get more or less narrative texts in the paper?

I think we get more now because we're pushing harder for it. The person who did the narrative in 2001 is still with us. He was about the only one whom I really trusted at that time.

Who is that?

His name is David Perry. He's the reporter who did the project. I trusted him and he's still with us. And another reporter who I think is how you found me because the story is posted on the Nieman website – I think this is how you found my name, right?

Yes, exactly.

This is another person I trust now to do narrative. That's been a teaching process. And I think there are other people I'm trying to bring a long, we had a couple of reporters who tried it. And they like it. So I'm trying to grow them but not every story is narrative, so it's picking the spots… I think we do a lot more of them than we used to but maybe not as much as we should some time.

And where do you see the future of this kind of writing, thinking of the internet and all the changes that are going on right now? Do you think in five years time, ten years time, there will still be narrative texts in newspapers?

Yes, because I think everything else is condensing into a lot smaller form. You know, everything is going up on the web immediately. It's all about 'okay, how quickly can we put it on the web'. And newspapers gonna evolve into something of a newsmagazine. Where I would see them in maybe 20 years is, there's not going to be any need to tell you the instant news because you got the news elsewhere. But there should always be room for just a good story that people can read and enjoy. And I think with the pressure on newspapers concerning new multi-media, we gotta be something different than we are now. And if you grab people's attention, grab their attention for ten minutes, have a surprise every day… 'Here's a story that you not gonna read anywhere else. It's a surprise and this is worth your time.' And I think that narrative suits so well into that that it's gonna become more important in the future. This is going to be the on niche thing that newspapers are going to be able to do. They're going to be able to tell stories.

So, would you agree with the Nieman people who say that this could be one way of saving newspapers?

I would agree with that. The Nieman folks are on to something. You have to find… you'd either be the best at what you do, or you have to be unique. And if you are no longer able to say 'this is what happened in the world yesterday', you have to find other ways to distinguish yourself. And one way newspapers are gonna do that is by telling human stories: 'Here are people in your neighborhood, here are people you care about, here are the things they're doing and here's why. You know, here's why you should read us every day.' It's up to a battle. And it's a battle we're fighting. At the same time, we're fighting with declining circulation, and we're fighting with loss of ad revenue and space in the paper, and the internet, and the bloggers and all those other things that are really, you know, challenging us. I think those are all fights but I think this is a fight that needs to be

fought in newsrooms, as well. I'm actually surprised as I look at a lot of front pages every day because it's part of my job, and I'm always looking for something that is going to grab me and surprise me. You know, why would I pick you up if I didn't know anything else about the paper? And how few do that! But when I see something, I'll read it. So they grab me.

How did you first come upon Narrative Journalism? How did it grab you?

I wish I could say there was a specific time. I've always been someone, as a reporter many, many years ago, I would not listen to my editors but I would try to read things that I found interesting and I would dissect them. Why would a reporter write it this way? And, you know, there's a little bit of the New Journalism of the 60s and 70s – this is interesting, I'm not sure if this really applies to what I'm doing. And then you start to look at how other newspapers were approaching stories and then you reach something. And even though I wouldn't have had the name Narrative Journalism for it, it was still narrative. And I started to see different places, I became sort of hooked up with Nieman and understood that there was a different way to approach things. This is different, this is intriguing, I'm gonna learn about it. I wish I had a moment, an epiphany but I don't.

It was more of a development…

Gradual, yeah. I think it was part of me trying to do better in what I did. And then, the other fun thing is, when you get into a room of people – I was at a couple of Nieman conferences – you get into a room of other people who share your love for something, there's an energy there. We can do this! There's a lot of affirmation there. I think I went there in 2002 for the first time and I was like 'Wow, this is great'. There's other people like me who think this is good stuff, too. So, yeah, it was a sort of gradual evolution. I'm a convert.

Okay, I see. Well, I'm basically through with my questions, so thank you so much for taking the time.

Thank you, I'm honored.