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# The digital animation of literary journalism

Journalism

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## Abstract

Since *The New York Times* published *Snow Fall* in 2012, media organizations have produced a growing body of similar work characterized by the purposeful integration of multimedia into long-form journalism. In this article, we argue that just as the literary journalists of the 1960s attempted to write the nonfiction equivalent of the great American novel, journalists of the 2010s are using digital tools to animate literary journalism techniques. To evaluate whether this emerging genre represents a new era of literary journalism and to what extent it incorporates new techniques of journalistic storytelling, we analyze 50 long-form multimedia journalism packages published online from August 2012 to December 2013. We argue that this new wave of literary journalism is characterized by executing literary techniques through multiple media and represents a gateway to linear storytelling in the hypertextual environment of the Web.

## Keywords

Content analysis, literary journalism, long-form, multimedia, New Journalism, storytelling

## Introduction

As news has evolved, journalists have experimented with new formats to enhance and transform the news-consumption experience (Barnhurst, 2010; Pauly, 2014). The use of

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literary techniques in journalism has been one of the methods that reporters and editors have employed to create variety in news storytelling. As far back as the 18th century, journalists used literary devices such as scenic reconstruction, evocative descriptions, and character development in their storytelling (Kerrane and Yagoda, 1997). In the 19th century, news readers were treated to immersive, engaging narratives about subjects as divergent as war and everyday life. This kind of journalism was not just informative, but interpretive, and filled with description, characters, and storylines that appealed to readers' emotions.

In the United States, such approaches to journalism appeared in several phases of what would become known as 'literary journalism', beginning in the 1890s with colorful depictions of war, poverty and personal lives (Connery, 1992). Another wave of literary journalism appeared in books and magazines of the 1930s and 1940s with narratives of the Great Depression and returned again in the 1960s with 'New Journalism', literary long-form journalism that declined briefly in the mid-1970s, emerged again in the mid-1980s, and persisted in newspapers through the early 2000s, when long-form literary journalism took second seat to concision, video, and news linked via social media that fit the format of websites and mobile phones.

In 2012, however, a long-form multimedia story titled *Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek* appeared on *The New York Times* website and served as a popular representation of emerging online journalism that seamlessly integrated multimedia into the narrative. In *Snow Fall*, a group of skiers are caught in an avalanche. Their story is told with a mixture of the written word and multimedia, including animation of snow drifting across a mountain and computerized flyovers of the story's setting. *Snow Fall* drew more than 3 million visitors to the site and received a Pulitzer Prize in 2013 for feature writing. Its popularity inspired dozens of US news outlets, magazines, and websites to integrate similar media technology with the written word (Clark, 2013; Zak, 2011). *Snow Fall* – and similar long-form multimedia projects – has since become a means to surprise and attract audiences (Dowling and Vogan, 2014). Since 2012, professional and scholarly discussion has focused on the integration of multimedia with the written word, the ethical dilemmas of maintaining journalistic objectivity through narration, the presentation of sources as characters, and public involvement in creating these projects (Greenberg, 2014; Tulloch, 2014).

The purpose of this article, however, is to determine the degree to which this movement of long-form multimedia journalism represents a new wave of literary journalism. Based upon an analysis of 50 long-form multimedia journalism packages published between August 2012 and December 2013, we identify and explicate the literary function of digital and multimedia elements that were common among the projects. In the end, we argue multimedia features of this long-form journalism are not just representations of the technological adeptness of today's journalists but also the driving force behind a new period of literary journalism.

## **The evolution of literary journalism: Pre-digital era to *Snow Fall***

In the news field, 'long-form' journalism is a term often used interchangeably with 'literary journalism'. While there is no official definition for 'long-form' journalism, criteria

seem to include both length and quality. Longform.org, an aggregation site of current and classic nonfiction, recommends only those articles that are at least 2000 words in length (Longform.org, n.d.). To David Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker*, however, long-form is ‘lengthy, relaxed, deeply reported, literary nonfiction’ (Sharp, 2013). To be clear, literary journalism has been viewed as but one type covered by ‘the long-form’; others include investigative stories and immersion (Meuret, 2013). Like long-form, the term ‘literary journalism’ has its own history of various definitions. Tackling these debates, Sims (2007), for instance, writes that literary journalism is characterized by the author’s voice being present in the narrative and ‘immersion reporting’ or the practice of spending large amounts of time with the subject, becoming immersed in his or her life for weeks or months, even years. Literary journalism, Sims writes, also ‘[uses] the tools long associated only with fiction, such as elaborate structures, characterization, and even symbolism, but with the added requirement of accuracy’ (Athitakis, 2012).

Newspapers and magazines have long published literary work, but literary forms in journalism itself have changed with the times, readers’ expectations, and business considerations (Connery, 1992). While literary journalism has never disappeared entirely from the American media, scholars have found it helpful to delineate certain periods in its evolution over the past 130 years. Most scholars agree that the first period of significant literary journalism in America began in the middle to late 1800s when newspapers such as the *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune* printed poetry, patriotic speeches, and the works of major literary writers of the time, such as Mark Twain (Sims, 2007). By the 1930s, that form of literary journalism had mostly disappeared from newspapers but appeared in magazines and books, the works focusing on addressing social issues such as poverty and war; notable writers of the time included John Hersey and James Agee (Connery, 1992). This period of literary journalism was also the era in which evocative writing was paired with documentary photography to deepen the influence of journalistic storytelling (Sims, 2007).

Literary journalism emerged in full-force again in the 1960s with narrative works by authors such as Joan Didion, Gay Talese, and Hunter S. Thompson appearing in newspapers, magazines, and books (Connery, 1992). The work of this period became known as ‘New Journalism’ (Wolfe, 1975), characterized by the adoption of literary techniques thought to be at odds with the traditional inverted pyramid structure of news stories, which fed industry movements to standardize journalistic style. The early years of the Web in the 1990s coincided with a welcoming time for literary journalism in print newspapers, as front pages published traditional storytelling ‘with character, complication, descriptive color, plot and resolution’ (Harstock, 2007: 258). Within two decades, a new generation of literary journalists emerged. Their work shared many characteristics of the literary journalism from previous periods. Magazines and newspapers carried the bylines of Susan Orlean, Tracy Kidder, and Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, along with some of those from the 1960s generation who were still writing this work.

The ‘New New Journalists’ appeared in the early 2000s as print journalists enjoyed a literary journalism ‘renaissance’ (Boynton, 2005), which quickly ended in newspapers as news organizations converged and newsroom staffs shrunk in size. The 2000s’ brief literary journalism movement was perhaps marked by the discontinuation in 2010 of Harvard’s Nieman Conference on Narrative Journalism, which had once hosted winners

of Pulitzers and others considered the prized literary journalists of the times. Journalists and industry analysts have written that today's long-form journalism has grown out of a lack of print and Web publication venues for written works longer than a magazine piece and shorter than a book (Meyer, 2012; Quart, 2011; Tayman, 2011; Wolman, 2011).

Despite advancements of online companies such as Byliner and Amazon.com's Kindle Store to promote long-form narrative storytelling in the form of interactive e-books where users swipe horizontally or vertically to navigate the text, it took *The New York Times* and its publication of *Snow Fall* – which garnered 3.5 million views and a 2013 Pulitzer Prize – to declare a new genre of long-form journalism (Bennet, 2013). The presentation was talked about so much that journalists across the country started asking a common question about their stories: 'Can we "snowfall" this?' (Dowling and Vogan, 2014; Sullivan, 2013).

*Snow Fall* was quickly followed by other long-form multimedia works, most notably *The Guardian's* 2013 *Firestorm*, a real-life account of an Australian family who survived a brush fire by clinging to a wooden boat dock. The story was told through the family's own chilling photographs, with ambient sounds of nature alternately calm and soothing and crackling within an inferno. As with many emerging Web-based long-form pieces, both *Snow Fall* and *Firestorm* use 'parallax scrolling', the technical ability to let some elements stay on a page longer than others as the user scrolls down the page and through the story (Greenfield, 2013; Jaffee, 2013), embedding the user into the narrative through visuals, audio, and compelling writing.

## Multimedia in the context of journalistic storytelling

In 1997, journalist Mark Bowden wrote *Black Hawk Down*, a narrative account of a battle between American Rangers and armed civilians in Mogadishu, Somalia. The work was published over 28 days on the *Philadelphia Inquirer* website. With images and videos peppered among the paragraphs, *Black Hawk Down* became the *Snow Fall* of its time, attracting hundreds of thousands of users and winning the *Editor & Publisher Award* for best journalistic series on the Internet. Today's long-form journalism continues to emerge at a dynamic time of technological advancement in the news industry, of conceptual understandings of visual studies, and of journalism as a ritualized form of storytelling (Gutsche, 2014; Manoff, 1986). Viewing the news as a ritual that employs drama, conflict, and characterization of news sources reveals the means by which journalists (and audiences) embed social and cultural meanings related to news events (Schudson, 2003). Because '[v]isual and verbal messages occur together in media, and audiences process them simultaneously' (Coleman, 2010: 235), journalists apply dialogue, metaphor, and narrative styles of writing to engage with audiences who decode news images in print and on TV to understand embedded social and cultural meanings.

The presentation style of works like *Snow Fall* provides fodder for further understanding of how media are derived from a complex cultural process of blending cultural information with technology and human intervention that also operates amid and among audiences and unlimited means and degrees of interaction and interpretation (Mitchell, 2013). In this way, Mitchell argues that '[t]here are no visual media ... all media are mixed media' (p. 9) and that the complex mixing of media, interactions, and influences

can be understood through the notion of ‘braiding’, in which two or more media appear together to create a combined meaning.

Technology has opened spaces to design and mixed media to emphasize specific modalities of news storytelling and presentation, such as journalists of the 17th century who used woodblocks to enable mass-produced illustrations and as today’s journalists do through photojournalism, news infographics, television broadcasts, and graphic journalism (Cooke, 2005; Gutsche, 2011; Schack, 2014). And, as Mitchell (2013) suggests by turning to film as an example, synchronized sound shapes a viewer’s (and listener’s) interaction with the medium, while text informs the script, the actor interprets the movements, the camera operator the angle, and the audience members’ environment the personal connection to the screen.

The extent to which journalists have effectively used multimedia to ‘tell stories’ varies. An analysis of multimedia on *The New York Times*’ website from 2000 to 2008, for instance, found that while the number of multimedia elements increased over time, most of the photo slideshows, interactive features, and videos used by *The Times* were produced as Web add-ons to stories originally published in the print newspaper (Jacobson, 2012). Therefore, to examine to what degree today’s long-form journalism may represent a movement of literary journalism, we seek to answer the following questions:

*RQ1. To what extent are literary modes of expression used in the stories, and how integral are literary elements to the presentation of the narrative?*

*RQ2. To what extent are multimedia elements present in the stories, how are they integrated into the narrative, and does their presence represent any ‘new’ techniques?*

*RQ3. To what extent do digital long-form packages represent a ‘new’ mode of journalistic storytelling?*

## Methodology

For this study, we conducted a content analysis of 50 long-form multimedia journalism packages published between August 2012 and December 2013 to determine the number and scope of literary techniques that appeared amid multimedia elements and journalistic storytelling. These dates reflect a period of time that begins with ESPN’s *The Long Strange Trip of Doc Ellis*, a work published just months before *Snow Fall* that attracted attention for its integration of technology and narrative journalism (Nguyen, 2012) and ends at the time of the study. As discussed above, there is no single definition of ‘long-form’ journalism; therefore, for the purposes of this article we relied on previous scholarship to characterize long-form journalism as consisting of in-depth reporting that results in at least 2000 words on a specific topic (Sharp, 2013).

To select multimedia packages for analysis, we referred to lists of ‘high-quality’ long-form multimedia journalism identified by popular websites dedicated to discussing online journalism, including Atavist.com, Longreads.com, and a crowd-sourced list of long-form multimedia packages called ‘Snowfallen’ by technology journalist Bobbie Johnson (2013). After identifying the packages to be used for analysis, we turned to previous research that identifies common characteristics in journalism and used these

characteristics of storytelling to construct a codebook (Darnton, 1975; Gutsche and Salkin, 2013; Jacobson, 2012; Manoff, 1986; Pfau et al., 2004; Schudson, 2005; Sims, 2007).

Additionally, our identification of literary techniques in journalistic storytelling was influenced by popular literature on the genre (Franklin, 1994; French, 2007; Hart, 2007; Hothschild, 2007; Kidder and Todd, 2013; Kramer, 2007; Wolfe, 1975). From these readings, we created a codebook for this analysis that identified the following core elements of literary journalism:

*Scene:* A cinematic retelling of an event using action, dialogue, specific details, and other features, such as emotional weight and volume used by ‘New Journalists’ to create scene-by-scene constructions;

*Dialogue:* Speech relayed in the story’s real time by either one or more characters in the story; a recording of ‘dialogue in full’ as another frequent device used by ‘New Journalists’;

*Characterization:* The process of developing news sources as a story’s characters with whom the readers can relate;

*Dramatic tension:* The conflict and tension of a story used to guide readers to a resolution of some conflict or the answering of a question.

We also coded for point of view, whether stories were told from the first person, third person, or a combination of perspectives. Furthermore, we coded for tone, where we evaluated each story as light, neutral, or serious. Such strategies for analysis have been employed by previous scholars as a means to identify storytelling characteristics in journalistic work (Darnton, 1975; Jacobson, 2012; Manoff, 1986; Schudson, 2005).

### *Examining multimedia elements*

Identifying multimedia elements in these packages was crucial to understanding the layered complexities of journalistic storytelling. Rather than merely reading one photograph or one line of text that is part of a larger and layered published work, for instance, media scholars take into account how each element of design, text, photograph, or moving image interact with one another to tell an overarching story (Huxford, 2001). Reese (2007), for instance, writes that as in literature and art, interpreting dominant meanings within journalism relies ‘precisely [on] *the way* that certain attributes come to be associated with particular issues’ (p. 152, emphasis in original). Indeed, the interaction of pull quotes, charts, headlines, design, and the written word in newspapers, or lower-thirds, voice-overs, and ambient sound in TV news reports also applies to news websites, which rely on visual characteristics like hyperlinks, typography, photography, thumbnails, and video (Coonfield and Huxford, 2009; Knox, 2009a, 2009b). Furthermore, such a layered approach is particularly important as news sites expand their use of new media to relay information through the act of journalistic storytelling and narrative.

Because the literary elements described above appeared in a multitude of media in stories examined for this study – photos, videos, and audio could each convey a sense of

time, place, and character, for example – we coded instances of storytelling and media separately to more clearly identify them in our analysis. In addition to the presence of photos, video, and audio, we also coded for text, illustrations, photo slideshows, audio slideshows, animation, maps, interactive infographics, and data visualizations, as well as other kinds of interactive features and pull quotes.

Furthermore, we coded stories for format, such as whether the story appeared on a tablet (horizontal scroll), whether it used parallax scroll, or whether the story was told on a single page. Finally, we noted the following characteristics: date of publication, country of publication, primary medium of publishing organization (e.g. nytimes.com was coded as newspaper and npr.org was coded as radio), number of contributors (writers, editors, photographers, videographers, Web developers, and others who are credited with producing the work), news category (breaking news, feature, analysis, etc.), and the editorial section in which the story was published (e.g. news, sports, and business).

### **Reliability**

The authors coded all 50 packages; a graduate student worked as an independent coder to test the reliability of the categories, as recommended by Kaid and Wadsworth (1989). The graduate student underwent training and coded 28 percent ( $n=14$ ) of the packages. To measure inter-coder reliability, percent agreement overall was calculated as 93.6 percent, ranging from 78.6 to 100 percent. Disagreements within the two categories with the lowest percentage agreement (78.6%), Tone and Point of View, was, by and large, the result of a small shade of difference, such as coding a package a ‘neutral serious’ versus ‘serious’ for Tone and coding a package with ‘combination first- and third-person perspective’ instead of ‘third-person perspective’ in Point of View.

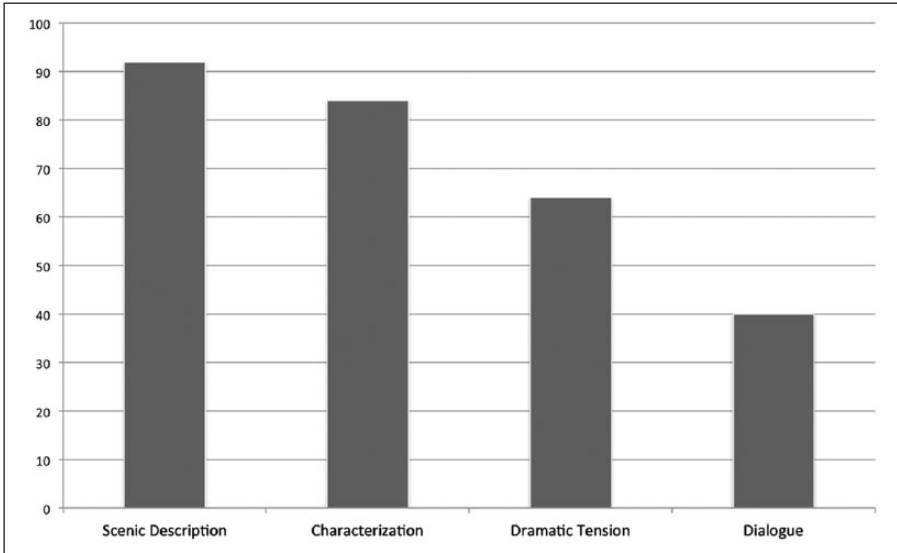
## **Results and analysis**

In this section, we present the results of our content analysis and argue that today’s long-form multimedia journalism represents a new wave of literary journalism. By applying the above core elements of literary journalism to this analysis, we discuss three main literary functions of multimedia in these packages: the interplay of multimedia and literary techniques to create meaning within the stories; the use of video loops as a device to establish the stories’ sense of time, place, and character; and the emergence of an alternative to the hypertextual norm of Web storytelling through the use of parallax and single-page scroll.

### **Overall characteristics of sample**

Eight of the 50 multimedia journalism packages reviewed for this study were published in 2012, and 42 were published in 2013. The packages came from four countries: the United States (78%,  $n=39$ ), the United Kingdom (14%,  $n=7$ ), Australia, and Canada (8%,  $n=2$  for each). The packages were from 27 publications, including 6 from *The New York Times*, 5 from the *Atavist*, 4 from the website *The Verge*, 3 each from *The Guardian* and the website *Pitchfork*, and 2 each from *The Wall Street Journal*, *The*





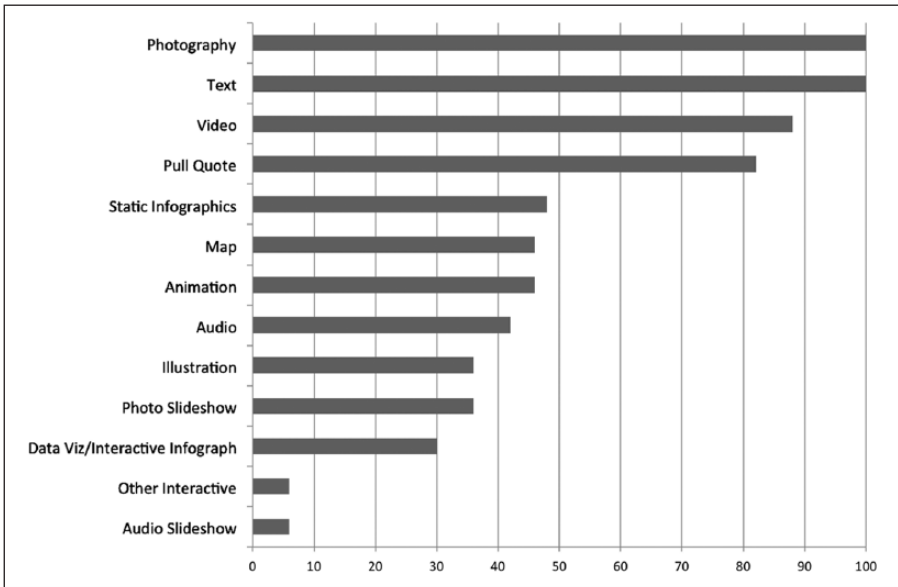
**Figure 1.** Percentage of literary journalism techniques used in 50 long-form multimedia packages.

*Washington Post*, *Rolling Stone* magazine, ESPN, National Public Radio (NPR), the website *Polygon*, and *The Daily Telegraph*. (For a full list, see Appendix 1.) All of the packages are published on the Web, and some, like the *Atavist* works, are also available as e-books. In all, 44 percent of packages ( $n=22$ ) were published by organizations whose primary publication venue is the newspaper, 22 percent of the packages ( $n=11$ ) were published by organizations where the primary publication venue is a website, 10 percent of the packages ( $n=5$ ) were published by organizations known for their magazines, 10 percent ( $n=5$ ) were published on the *Atavist*, 12 percent ( $n=6$ ) were radio or TV companies, and 1 was considered a news service. The number of words ranged from 2147 to 35,081, with an average word count of 9049.

### Literary characteristics

In total, 96 percent ( $n=48$ ) of the packages employed various types of techniques of literary journalism (Figure 1). Scenic description was found in 92 percent of the packages ( $n=46$ ), character development in 84 percent ( $n=42$ ), dramatic tension in 64 percent ( $n=32$ ), and dialogue in 40 percent ( $n=20$ ) of the packages. The tone of the stories was more likely to be serious or neutral-serious (70%,  $n=35$ ) than light or neutral-light (18%,  $n=9$ ) or neutral (16%,  $n=8$ ). A total of 66 percent of packages used the traditional third-person narrative perspective ( $n=33$ ), while 34 percent ( $n=17$ ) were told from either a combination of first- and third-person perspectives or first-person perspective. Sixty-eight percent ( $n=34$ ) of the packages used at least three of the four literary devices and are the packages to be analyzed below.





**Figure 2.** Percentage of multimedia elements in 50 long-form multimedia packages.

### *Multimedia elements*

All of the packages used text and photos in the presentation. In total, 88 percent ( $n=44$ ) used video, 48 percent ( $n=24$ ) incorporated static infographics, 46 percent ( $n=23$ ) used animation, and 30 percent ( $n=15$ ) used data visualizations or interactive infographics. (See Figure 2 for the presence of media elements.) On average, each package used 6.6 different media elements. In sum, 80 percent ( $n=40$ ) of the packages included regular video as part of the storytelling process, and 34 percent ( $n=17$ ) included video loops. Of these, 26 percent ( $n=13$ ) used both, and 8 percent ( $n=4$ ) featured only the loops. Packages that included regular video used an average of 6.35 videos in each. The average length of the fully produced videos was 2 minutes, 18 seconds. Packages that included video loops used an average of 6.5 loops in each. In all, 56 percent of the packages ( $n=28$ ) included parallax scroll, 34 percent ( $n=17$ ) functioned as a single page without parallax scroll, and 10 percent ( $n=5$ ) were published in e-book format.

### *Other characteristics*

In total, 82 percent of the packages ( $n=41$ ) were characterized as feature stories, 10 percent ( $n=5$ ) were coded as investigative pieces, and 8 percent ( $n=4$ ) stories were coded as analysis. Seven (14%) of the packages were related to sports (including *Snow Fall*), 20 percent ( $n=10$ ) were profiles that focused on a single individual or group for their special talents (including a profile of chef Curtis Duffy in *His Saving Grace*, and Joe Dombrowski in *Cycling's Road Forward*), and 14 percent ( $n=7$ ) were profiles of groups

or individuals that represented larger issues (including the parents, children, and doctors in *Trials* and residents of the town of Newtok, AK, in *America's First Climate Refugees*). In all, 16 of the packages (32%) recounted real-life drama (including *Snow Fall*, *Firestorm*, *The Elliot Lake Mall Collapse*, and *The Child Exchange*).

## Literary modes of expression: The storytelling power of multimedia integration

In this section, we explicate how textual literary journalism elements, multimedia, and digital techniques applied in these multimedia projects developed the stories' characters and scenes, delivered story dialogue, enhanced the stories' drama, and developed meaning. We select several packages that represent common findings of this analysis to explicate the literary qualities and functions of the multimedia that was used.

### *The interplay of multimedia and literary journalism techniques to create meaning*

Literary techniques appeared throughout the packages' multiple means of delivering narrative structures to immerse the user in the story. Packages' literary elements can be identified as operating within Wolfe's (1975) four devices of literary journalism. First, the journalists' construction of scenes invested the user into the movements of the characters, replacing moments of information with explicit details of their physical experiences and emotions. For example, *Out in the Great Alone* recounts the experience of a *Grantland* journalist sent to cover the Alaskan Iditarod. Reporter Brian Phillips describes a scene at the beginning of the race as the dogs are getting ready:

Dogs are scratching themselves, snarling down meat, yawning, whining, wrestling, pissing, drum-majoring their tails ... When the handlers start pulling out sleds and clipping the teams to their tow lines, the collective canine intelligence realizes that – ohmigosh, *ohmigosh* – it's about to go for a run. This is when the dogs truly begin to freak out. (emphasis in original)

Scene construction is also reflected in short, shaky videos that look like they might have been taken with a camera phone, which accompany the written word. The images are shot from a small plane that the journalist flew to cover the race and serve to establish the desolation of the Iditarod.

*The Washington Post's The Prophets of Oak Ridge* uses scenic reconstruction to tell the story of three peace activists who broke into a US nuclear facility. Accompanying the spare writing style are simple infographics and comic book–styled images that build suspense:

The nun plodded up the steep and densely wooded ridge. In front of her was the painter, behind her the drifter and the boundary fence. Pathless, they snaked slowly in wide turns to ease the climb, pausing often so she could catch her breath.

The text is punctuated with documentary photography and illustrations of the story stylized to look like comic book graphics. We see a photo of the cookie-cutter homes in

Oak Ridge, TN, along with an illustration of the three characters/sources cutting the barrier fence and entering the Y-12 weapons facility. These depictions place the multimedia journalist in the role of guide with whom users experience the characters' stories and come to interpret the works as commentary and storytelling of social issues and everyday life that are deemed important by the very depth of presentation (Gutsche and Salkin, 2013; Manoff, 1986; Sims, 2007).

Wolfe's second device of literary journalism calls for the use of dialogue, particularly the vernacular of sources and not the polished language of the journalists, to deliver drama and dialogue in ways that humanize the story's characters (Tulloch, 2014; Wolfe, 1975). A total of 40 percent of the story packages included some written dialogue. For example, *Grantland's Out in the Great Alone* serves to establish the character of the journalist reporting the story and heighten suspense about how he will report on the Iditarod:

'Do you have experience in winter-survival-type situations?' he asked.

'Sure', I said. 'I survive them by staying indoors. It's a technique that's worked well for me so far'.

'Have you spent any time in small aircraft?'

'I've, uh ... I've watched movies where people spent time in small aircraft'.

'How about winter camping, backpacking, anything along those lines?'

'Day hikes', I said miserably.

There was a pause on the other end of the line. 'Well', he said, 'I'll be straight with you. There are a lot of ways to die in Alaska'.

Another presentation, *Tomato Can Blues*, which appeared on *The New York Times'* website, combines animated comic book panels and dramatic writing to illustrate the story of a man who faked his own death. The package opens with two men fighting in a boxing ring surrounded by a chain-linked fence; a crowd of men in the foreground hold expressions of cheers and jeers, their arms raised in excitement. A comic book dialogue box reads, 'The cage was getting **smaller** by the hour ...' (emphasis in original). As the user scrolls down the page, the opening illustration moves. It appears as though the user herself is moving through the crowd, toward the cage, what those in that fighting scene called a 'tomato can'.

Placed in the story, among the crowd, the user is ready to become part of the community and able to translate the meanings of the vernacular of the story's characters, including their means of expression by referring to themselves as 'fighters', cage fighting as 'battle', a robbery as 'hit(ting) a lick', and their bodies as tools for individual expression.

In addition to letting the story's characters tell their own tales in their own words and using comic book techniques within which the characters acted out their experiences, the journalists performed a core function of literary journalism: the humanization of the story's sources. As Schudson (2005) writes, humanization helps to build meaningful narrations to which audiences can easily relate and by which these sources-as-characters serve as a foundation for the stories' meanings and by which the narrative's sights and sounds are not only suggested and described but are seen and heard.

Wolfe's third device of literary journalism involves the use of the third person's point of view or, more specifically, a perspective that is other than that of the journalist as storyteller (Tulloch, 2014; Wolfe, 1975). The readers learn about what is happening in the story from the point of view of one or more characters in the story. *His Saving Grace*, published by the *Chicago Tribune*, tells the story of chef Curtis Duffy's rise from a troubled childhood to a rising star in the Chicago restaurant scene. Journalist Kevin Pang uses the third-person perspective to describe Duffy's emotional journey:

When he'd first started cooking five years earlier, the kitchen was a place to run away to from the fighting at home, a place that kept him from bullying neighborhood kids. Now his parents were dead. Every hour focused on cooking was another hour not dealing with his confusion and anger. He dreaded the end of the shift. While other chefs at Muirfield Village Golf Club went out for drinks afterward, Curtis stayed in the head chef's office and dived into the cookbooks.

The story is accompanied by images from Duffy's childhood, including graphic news video showing police breaking into his family home and shooting his parents. The news clip further underscores the third-person perspective of the story, as the users become spectators of an awful event that changed the course of Duffy's life. Furthermore, such multimedia strengthens an ideological and emotional connection between the narratives at the core of these stories, the characters who act out the scenes and experiences, the producer and technology platform, and the users as participants, thereby reifying the intimate relationships inherent in literary journalism.

Wolfe's fourth and final device of literary journalism is the recording of certain details that reflect the characters' 'status life'. Through 'everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs, styles of furniture' and other things, readers can see patterns of behavior that reveal how the characters see their place in the world (Wolfe, 1975: 47). *The Jockey*, for example, published by *The New York Times*, tells the story of Russell Baze, the 'winningest' jockey in American history. Through text, video, photography, and other elements, the story is punctuated with minute details of Baze's life on and off the track:

Each evening, Tami makes her husband dinner – often chicken or pasta – and if Baze has won that day, the two watch replays of the victories as they eat. He clears the table and then reads to her as she does the dishes and he continues as she sips hot cocoa. His idea of gluttony is three slices of pizza and a dish of ice cream.

Video embedded within the parallax scroll appears at different times during the story, providing visual details of the racing world Baze inhabits: We see him preparing in his dressing room, the trumpeter signaling the start of the race, and stable hands mucking stalls while the horses exercise at daybreak. All of these elements provide the details that help the user understand the world of Russell Baze and to be able to apply the user's interpretations of meanings associated with these long-form packages to larger issues of society and culture, a core purpose of literary journalism (Connery, 1992; Wolfe, 1975) through integrated multimedia.

### *Video loops: Multimedia as an agent for literary storytelling*

Journalists used literary techniques in almost all of the packages in this study that were rendered not just in words but through multimedia. One technique in particular that appeared in 34 percent of the packages was the video loop, a short, repetitive video, most silent but some with audio, which served to give a sense of place, time, or character in the story. Such loops served as a literary agent to provide a sense of authenticity to the journalistic prose and presentation, an objective discussed by other scholars (Hart, 2007; Hothschild, 2007; Sims, 2007).

For example, a treacherous sea voyage of refugees from Indonesia to Australia's Christmas Island in *Dream Boat* by *The New York Times Magazine* is captured in a video loop filmed by the journalists on board the rickety boat as it is tossed by the waves. The loop is seamlessly integrated into the single-page textual story, suddenly appearing on screen at the appropriate point in the story with no need to press a start button to begin. The short video reveals to the audience, on a visceral level, the risk inherent in the voyage – a risk that may be lost through the abstraction of textual description.

Two packages in particular represent how loops worked to bring the user into the environment to experience the story alongside the main sources-as-characters (Gutsche, 2014; Schudson, 2005). *Trials*, published by *The Wall Street Journal*, is an extensive investigative piece on a group of families and doctors who go to extreme lengths to secure treatment for a rare childhood disease. Video loops are used to portray character portraits of people in the story. For example, a loop captures the innocence of two children, ultimate victims of the disease, sleeping in the comfort and security of their own bed. We see doctors and parents looking straight into the camera, so still that it is only after a blink of the eyes or a purse of the lips that the user realizes the images are rendered in video.

In *Watch Dogs: Invasion*, a story about municipal surveillance in Chicago and its depiction in the video game *Watch Dogs*, video loop portraits remind us of surveillance as a contemporary social issue that can have very personal ramifications as more communities fall under watchful eyes of their governments. In this video, the user is presented with an uncomfortable interaction with the potential influence of the story's topic: Subjects look directly into the camera and the user returns the gaze, creating a surreal relationship that leaves the user asking, 'Are we watching them, or are they watching us?'

Perhaps, more than any other multimedia element employed in these packages, video loops established characters and personal associations in ways similar to how literary journalism conveys the same sensibilities in writing. By blending the author's subjectivity and the verisimilitude that connects the reader/user with representations of sources, settings, and story (Darnton, 1975; Greenberg, 2014; Manoff, 1986; Sims, 2007), such storytelling positioned journalists as storytellers – and on occasion, as characters – that harken to the days of New Journalism in the 1960s that 'not only report(ed) on society but enact(ed) the social' (Pauly, 2014: 2).

### *Forging a space for linear narrative on the web*

The long-form multimedia packages analyzed in this study represent an emergence of linear storytelling on the hypertextual Web. Before the Internet – before the widespread

use of computing – scholars understood the limitations of information delivered in the linear, finished forms of the book, the movie, the printed magazine (Bush, 1945; Landow, 2006; Nelson, 1981). As journalism and other media have developed online, storytelling forms took a turn toward shorter, multi-linear, and networked communication.

Parallax scroll and single-page scroll – two techniques used in these packages – created a more centered, more linear presentation of the narrative. In all, 56 percent ( $n=28$ ) of the presentations in this study used parallax scroll, replacing a hyperlinked menu of items with a single page where transitions are used to reveal different sections of the stories. An additional 34 percent of the packages in this study ( $n=17$ ) used a simple single-page format that mimicked parallax scroll – for example, by placing large video loops or photographs between sections of the story rather than creating a parallax transition.

*Snow Fall*, for example, was memorable not just because the written story by itself was compelling, and not just because of the multimedia elements of snowy landscapes and animated three-dimensional (3D) maps, but rather because these elements were seamlessly integrated in single-page presentations, where text ceded to image which ceded back to text in an unbroken flow. *Snow Fall* showed that there was a place for linear ‘narrative’ storytelling – a structural characteristic shared by most literary journalism, which began in print media (Kramer, 1995) – on the Web, although the Web’s native format, hypertext, ‘challenges all literary form based on linearity, calls into question ideas of plot and story current since Aristotle’ (Landow, 2006: 218).

In *Snow Fall*, as the user scrolls down the page, written text scrolls up and over the video loop of a snowstorm on the title screen. Further along, the background color of the page turns from white to gray as an animated flyover of the Tunnel Creek mountainside replaces the text that came before it. The ability to create transitions while still on a single page is in contrast to hypertext, which seeks to emphasize the outward linkages of elements in a story, enable skipping around the narrative, and encourage shorter units of meaning (Landow, 2006; Manovich, 2001; Nelson, 1981). The move toward more-faster-smaller units of information on the Web perhaps made it inevitable that a new long-form would emerge (Neveu, 2014), giving users an opportunity to choose between hypertextually fragmented news ‘skipping stones’ and long-form stories that provide a ‘moral’ alternative that demands focused attention on the part of the audience (Ball, 2013).

## Conclusion

Based upon an analysis of 50 long-form multimedia journalism packages published between August 2012 and December 2013, this article argues that these forms of digital journalism represent a new wave of literary journalism. More specifically, our analysis of the packages’ core storytelling characteristics of literary journalism suggest that while this genre’s use of multimedia techniques like video loops and digital formats like parallax and single-page scroll reflects the technological skill of today’s journalists, the techniques also represent the integration of technology in storytelling that holds literary purposes of its own. Such digital storytelling encompasses more than the fragmented, de-centered, hypertextual blocks of the Web and furthers the field’s understandings of the Web’s potential for dramatic and immersive journalism.

By no means, however, do we consider this article to be the complete story on literary functions of this emerging form of journalistic storytelling. However, future research will benefit from an initial foundation that examines the underlying form of literary journalism on the Web. As scholars continue to uncover the breadth and depth of journalistic storytelling in a digital age, they should be encouraged to examine the civic applications of this new wave of literary journalism, the potential influence of traditional – or legacy – news readers, and the potential for theoretical and practical implications related to how and why news outlets produce such works.

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## Appendix I

Title	URL
<i>The Agony of Rob Ford</i> <i>America's First Climate Refugees</i>	<a href="http://www.cbc.ca/news/interactives/agonny-of-ford/">http://www.cbc.ca/news/interactives/agonny-of-ford/</a> <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/interactive/2013/may/13/newtok-alaska-climate-change-refugees">http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/interactive/2013/may/13/newtok-alaska-climate-change-refugees</a>
<i>Angel Killer</i> <i>The Art Outside the Box</i>	<a href="https://www.atavist.com/stories/angel-killer/">https://www.atavist.com/stories/angel-killer/</a> <a href="http://www.polygon.com/features/2013/2/14/3768030/roger-dean-outside-the-box-psygnosis">http://www.polygon.com/features/2013/2/14/3768030/roger-dean-outside-the-box-psygnosis</a>
<i>Atari Teenage Riot</i>	<a href="http://www.buzzfeed.com/christokelwalker/atari-teenage-riot-the-inside-story-of-pong-and-t">http://www.buzzfeed.com/christokelwalker/atari-teenage-riot-the-inside-story-of-pong-and-t</a>
<i>The Austerity Audit</i> <i>The Bones of Marianna</i>	<a href="http://ft.com/austerity">http://ft.com/austerity</a> <a href="https://www.atavist.com/stories/the-bones-of-marianna/">https://www.atavist.com/stories/the-bones-of-marianna/</a>
<i>Chasing the Beast</i> <i>The Child Exchange</i>	<a href="http://extras.denverpost.com/stormchaser">http://extras.denverpost.com/stormchaser</a> <a href="http://www.reuters.com/investigates/adoption/#article/part1">http://www.reuters.com/investigates/adoption/#article/part1</a>
<i>Cyborg America</i>	<a href="http://www.theverge.com/2012/8/8/3177438/cyborg-america-biohackers-grinders-body-hackers">http://www.theverge.com/2012/8/8/3177438/cyborg-america-biohackers-grinders-body-hackers</a>
<i>Cycling's Road Forward</i>	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/sports/wp/2013/02/27/cyclings-road-forward/">http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/sports/wp/2013/02/27/cyclings-road-forward/</a>
<i>Deep Soul – The Muscle Shoals Sound</i> <i>The Dream Boat</i>	<a href="http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/muscle-shoals/index.html">http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/muscle-shoals/index.html</a> <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/17/magazine/the-impossible-refugee-boat-lift-to-christmas-island.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/17/magazine/the-impossible-refugee-boat-lift-to-christmas-island.html</a>
<i>The Drug That Never Lets Go</i> <i>The Elliot Lake Mall Collapse</i>	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/newshour/multimedia/bath-salts/">http://www.pbs.org/newshour/multimedia/bath-salts/</a> <a href="http://site.macleans.ca/longform/elliott-lake-mall-collapse-one-step-from-death/">http://site.macleans.ca/longform/elliott-lake-mall-collapse-one-step-from-death/</a>
<i>Finding Shakespeare</i> <i>Firestorm</i>	<a href="https://www.atavist.com/stories/finding-shakespeare/">https://www.atavist.com/stories/finding-shakespeare/</a> <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2013/may/26/firestorm-bushfire-dunalley-holmes-family">http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2013/may/26/firestorm-bushfire-dunalley-holmes-family</a>
<i>Five Seasons: Spending a Playing Year Is Aussie AFL</i>	<a href="http://www.theage.com.au/interactive/2013/fiveseasons">http://www.theage.com.au/interactive/2013/fiveseasons</a>

**Appendix I. (Continued)**

Title	URL
<i>For Amusement Only: The Life and Death of the American Arcade</i>	<a href="http://www.theverge.com/2013/1/16/3740422/the-life-and-death-of-the-american-arcade-for-amusement-only">http://www.theverge.com/2013/1/16/3740422/the-life-and-death-of-the-american-arcade-for-amusement-only</a>
<i>A Game of Shark and Minnow</i>	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2013/10/27/south-china-sea/">http://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2013/10/27/south-china-sea/</a>
<i>The Geeks on the Front Lines</i>	<a href="http://www.rollingstone.com/feature/the-geeks-on-the-frontlines">http://www.rollingstone.com/feature/the-geeks-on-the-frontlines</a>
<i>The Ghost of Speedy Cannon</i>	<a href="http://www.si.com/longform/speedy/index.html">http://www.si.com/longform/speedy/index.html</a>
<i>Glitter in the Dark</i>	<a href="http://pitchfork.com/features/cover-story/reader/bat-for-lashes/">http://pitchfork.com/features/cover-story/reader/bat-for-lashes/</a>
<i>Greenland's Ice Sheets Are Disappearing Faster than Anyone Predicted</i>	<a href="http://www.rollingstone.com/feature/greenland-melting">http://www.rollingstone.com/feature/greenland-melting</a>
<i>His Saving Grace</i>	<a href="http://graphics.chicagotribune.com/grace/">http://graphics.chicagotribune.com/grace/</a>
<i>Invisible Child: Dasani's Homeless Life</i>	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/invisible-child">http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/invisible-child</a>
<i>The Jockey</i>	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/the-jockey">http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/the-jockey</a>
<i>Keep the Things You Forgot: An Elliott Smith Oral History</i>	<a href="http://pitchfork.com/features/articles/9246-elliott-smith/">http://pitchfork.com/features/articles/9246-elliott-smith/</a>
<i>Kennedy and Oswald: Killing Kennedy</i>	<a href="http://kennedyandoswald.com/">http://kennedyandoswald.com/</a>
<i>The Lobotomy Files</i>	<a href="http://projects.wsj.com/lobotomyfiles/">http://projects.wsj.com/lobotomyfiles/</a>
<i>The Long, Strange Trip of Dock Ellis</i>	<a href="http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/eticket/story?page=Dock-Ellis">http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/eticket/story?page=Dock-Ellis</a>
<i>Machines for Life</i>	<a href="http://pitchfork.com/features/cover-story/reader/daft-punk/">http://pitchfork.com/features/cover-story/reader/daft-punk/</a>
<i>MLK six:01</i>	<a href="http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/local-news/601-martin-luther-king-jrs-last-32-hours-memphis">http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/local-news/601-martin-luther-king-jrs-last-32-hours-memphis</a>
<i>Murder on the Mekong</i>	<a href="https://periodic.atavist.com/view/theatavist/story/189">https://periodic.atavist.com/view/theatavist/story/189</a>
<i>My Year With Malala</i>	<a href="http://features.thesundaytimes.co.uk/public/malala">http://features.thesundaytimes.co.uk/public/malala</a>
<i>The NSA Files: Decoded</i>	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded">http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded</a>
<i>Out in the Great Alone</i>	<a href="http://www.grantland.com/story/_/id/9175394/out-great-alone">http://www.grantland.com/story/_/id/9175394/out-great-alone</a>
<i>Planet Money Makes a T-Shirt</i>	<a href="http://apps.npr.org/tshirt/">http://apps.npr.org/tshirt/</a>
<i>The Prophets of Oak Ridge</i>	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/style/2013/04/29/the-prophets-of-oak-ridge/">http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/style/2013/04/29/the-prophets-of-oak-ridge/</a>
<i>Scamworld: 'Get Rich Quick' Schemes Mutate into an Online Monster</i>	<a href="http://www.theverge.com/2012/5/10/2984893/scamworld-get-rich-quick-schemes-mutate-into-an-online-monster">http://www.theverge.com/2012/5/10/2984893/scamworld-get-rich-quick-schemes-mutate-into-an-online-monster</a>
<i>Sex Predators Unleashed</i>	<a href="http://interactive.sun-sentinel.com/jimmy-ryce/investigation.html">http://interactive.sun-sentinel.com/jimmy-ryce/investigation.html</a>
<i>Snow Fall</i>	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall">http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall</a>

(Continued)

**Appendix I. (Continued)**

Title	URL
<i>Stray Bullet</i> <i>The Town That Wouldn't Disappear</i>	<a href="https://www.atavist.com/stories/stray-bullet/">https://www.atavist.com/stories/stray-bullet/</a> <a href="http://bulga.theglobalmail.org">http://bulga.theglobalmail.org</a>
<i>Tomato Can Blues</i>	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/tomato-can-blues/">http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/tomato-can-blues/</a>
<i>Trials</i> <i>Unfit for Work</i>	<a href="http://projects.wsj.com/trials">http://projects.wsj.com/trials</a> <a href="http://apps.npr.org/unfit-for-work/">http://apps.npr.org/unfit-for-work/</a>
<i>Watch Dogs: Invasion</i>	<a href="http://www.polygon.com/features/2013/10/16/4817988/watch-dogs-invasion">http://www.polygon.com/features/2013/10/16/4817988/watch-dogs-invasion</a>
<i>Wrappers Delight</i> <i>Your Meat Addiction Is Destroying the Planet (But We Can Fix It)</i>	<a href="http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/tunnocks">http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/tunnocks</a> <a href="http://www.theverge.com/2013/8/13/4605528/your-meat-addiction-is-destroying-the-planet-but-we-can-fix-it">http://www.theverge.com/2013/8/13/4605528/your-meat-addiction-is-destroying-the-planet-but-we-can-fix-it</a>