

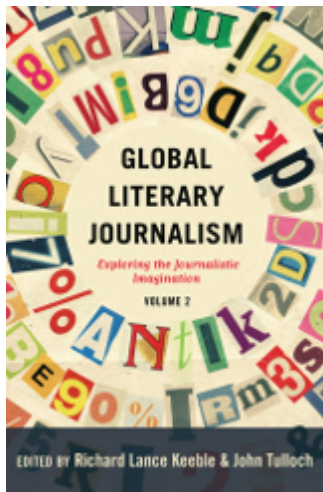
rezensionen:kommunikation:medien

Rezensionen aus den Bereichen Kommunikation und Medien

Richard Lance Keeble, John Tulloch (Hrsg.): Global Literary Journalism (Volume 2)

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Published in 2014, *Global Literary Journalism: Exploring the Journalistic Imagination* is the sequel of [the first volume with the same title](#), which appeared in 2012. With this second volume, the editors have taken on the difficult task of not only broadening the scope considerably – both in terms of the themes and countries as well as authors covered –, but, moreover, they have attempted to close those gaps of research, which, over the years, have been addressed in the context of the annual conventions of the [International Association for Literary Journalism Studies](#) and have emerged as desiderata in the previous volume. These include, for instance, a more detailed analysis of the origins of literary journalism, a critical engagement with female writers and non-elite sources, and a thorough examination of the power of storytelling as well as an investigation of the journalistic imagination as both a central cultural field and a contested terrain, as Richard Lance Keeble writes in the introduction.

Paying tribute to his co-editor John Tulloch who died in October 2013 at the age of 67, Keeble surveys the four sections of the volume in the introductory essay: Section 1 consists of six contributions, which ‘dig [...] into the historical roots of literary journalism’; Section 2 explores ‘history as seen by literary journalists’ in three chapters; the following three chapters of Section 3 grapple with the question of whether there is a specific woman’s voice in literary journalism; and Section 4, which again assembles six articles, gives interesting insights into the power of storytelling in an international context. The volume closes with an afterword by [John S. Bak](#) and, like the first volume, contains a useful index, which helps readers to navigate through the book.

As the subtitle indicates, the studies that come together in this volume could be subsumed under the notion of exploratory research, i.e., research that is undertaken in order to acquire new insights into yet uncharted territory or underresearched phenomena. The specificity of this kind of research is that it is by its very nature innovative and revelatory, since it brings to light undiscovered texts, novel aspects of storytelling in literary journalism or challenges established truths about a genre that is still evolving, and thus instills a sense of wonder and delight in the reader. If one were to evaluate the quality of *Global Literary Journalism* (vol. 2) on these grounds only, there is no doubt that the essays collected in this book live up to the ideal of exploratory research in that their authors formulate problems, develop and test hypotheses and delineate further avenues of research when it comes to the appeal of literary journalism across the globe.

What unites the articles, furthermore, is the authors' approach to the research object – literary journalism: The essays almost all start with a brief biographical sketch of the writer, followed by a section which contextualizes the writer's piece(s) in terms of publication outlet and contemporary debates. The primary focus of the article is usually on the aesthetic elements used in the writer's work(s). The line of argumentation that underlies the close reading of pieces of literary journalism culminates in most articles in the central tenet that the writer in question should be regarded as part of the evolving canon of literary journalism.

As always, there are, of course, some exceptions to the rule, by which I mean articles that follow a different structure. These articles stand out either because they are dealing with more than one writer or because they make an attempt at theorizing, classifying and/or systematizing the works of literary journalists according to specific criteria or with the help of analytical tools derived from literary and cultural studies as well as theories developed in literary journalism studies. For instance, when investigating African American Literary Journalism in the 1950s, [Roberta S. Maguire](#) examines a larger corpus and generates interesting results presented in the form of four major categories (85). Though different in terms of its approach, the critical overview of Brazilian literary journalism by Mateus Yuri Passos gestures beyond a single writer and thus explores the journalistic imagination from more than one vantage point. And just as [Bill Reynolds'](#) comparative study of the work of [Charles Bowden](#) and [Ciudad Juárez](#) captures the poetics of *two* writers of literary journalism, Juan Domingues and Alice Trindade's article brings together *two* moments in Portuguese literary journalism by looking at the 19/20th century turn and the early 21st century.

What I certainly do not mean to imply by this list is that the more writers are investigated in a single article, the better. Rather, I wish to suggest that for an academic discipline like literary journalism studies the sole aim of a volume like this cannot be to make a case for an ever-expanding canon of literary journalism by adding “new names to the *dramatis persona* of literary journalists and literary journalist scholars” (294), as Bak writes in the Afterword. On the contrary, literary journalist scholars should concern themselves with three issues:

Firstly, literary journalist scholars should aim at theorizing literary journalism's “liminal space” (56), mentioned in several of the volume's articles. As N. Ram rightly argues, “[t]o accommodate and admire the workings of the porous line between fact and fiction in the canon of literary journalism is, of course, easier than to theorize about it” (231). The challenge is therefore to conceptualize the ‘porous line between fact and fiction’, which will prove beneficial to all those interested in literary journalism.

Secondly, instead of “taking as a reference concepts and theories of literary journalism” (171), which in this essay collection at times comes across as mere name-dropping of the usual suspects

(e.g., Hollowell, Sims, Kramer, Boynton, Wolfe etc.), literary journalist scholars should engage more deeply with some of the concepts (e.g., ‘meta-narrative’, ‘literary systems’, ‘collective memory’ etc.) that they employ in order to analyze literary journalism. In particular, [Fredric Jameson](#)’s notion of the ‘politics of form’, i.e., the argument that the form (rather than the content) of a narrative is inherently ideological, as shines through in a few articles in this volume as well (cf., e.g., Soares, Keeble), should be given more attention in future research on literary journalism.

Last but not least, literary journalist scholars should establish a set of criteria that would allow them to make a case as to whether a certain writer or a specific work deserves to be included in the canon of literary journalism, for they otherwise fall prey to the reproach of not only arbitrarily choosing texts for analysis, like Edvaldo Pereira Lima and Monica Martinez do in their study, but also of randomly expanding the canon.

The real challenge for the third volume then lies in the establishment of criteria, standards, theories and methodologies that would make possible to formulate, at least tentatively, answers to the question of what it is that “is now fast becoming the discipline of literary journalism studies” (295). To be sure, this is too big a task to accomplish in a single volume, but what Richard Lance Keeble and John Tulloch, despite the aforementioned shortcomings, have already achieved is to remind the reader of the diversity and multitude of the different forms and functions of literary journalism, which all have to be taken into consideration once we actually start theorizing about the genre.

Links:

- [Verlagsinformationen zum Buch](#)
- [Webpräsenz von Prof. Richard Lance Keeble an der University of Lincoln \(UK\)](#)
- [Webpräsenz von Dr. Nora Berning an der Justus-Liebig Universität Gießen](#)

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