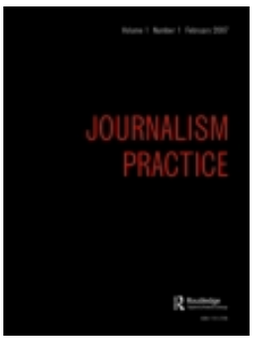

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WHAT IS SLOW JOURNALISM?

Megan Le Masurier

In an era of fast and instantaneous journalism and concerns about the deleterious effects of speed, it can be easy to lose sight of the other kinds of journalism being practiced, other temporalities for its production. There has been little scholarly work on slow journalism, so the first aim of this article is, if not to define, then at least to describe some key characteristics of what slow journalism might be. It will look at how the term has been used on blogs, websites, public forums, and in the minimal scholarly literature available. It will also explore some examples by producers who identify with the term to see what slow journalism looks like in practice. The proliferation of independent journalism using Slow as a way of thinking about production suggests that we are witnessing a new alternative emerging in the mediascape.

KEYWORDS alternative journalism; fast journalism; magazine journalism; Slow; slow journalism; slow news journalism

Introduction

In an era of fast and instantaneous journalism and concerns about the deleterious effects of speed, it can be easy to lose sight of the other kinds of journalism being practiced, other temporalities for its production. A counter discourse and practice has been emerging in recent years from journalists, editors, publishers and commentators interested in slowing journalism down. There has been little scholarly work on slow journalism, so the main aim of this article is, if not to define, then at least to describe some key characteristics of what slow journalism might be. It will look at how the term has been used on blogs, websites, public forums and in the minimal scholarly literature available. It will also discuss some examples by producers who self-identify with the term to see what slow journalism looks like in practice. (There are many more examples of journalism that could be considered Slow, but for reasons of space the focus here will be on publishers, editors and journalists who describe their work as slow journalism.)

This article is not a prescription for the future state of all journalism in an era of speed and communicative abundance. Given the imbrication of industrial journalism with turbo-capitalism and instantaneous media technologies, that would be naïve. The proliferating examples of independent journalism using Slow as a way of approaching production suggest, however, that we are witnessing a new and critical alternative in the mediascape.

Journalism

Before we can explore slow journalism, it is important to make clear my understanding of journalism itself. Journalism is a plural noun. "There is not and never has been a single unifying activity to be thought of as journalism," writes Martin Conboy (2004, 3). "Journalism has always been multiple," argues Barbie Zelizer (2009, 1), "and its multiplicity has become more pronounced as journalism has necessarily mutated." Rather than seeing journalism as one thing, as a "unitary model," Zelizer suggests we think of

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"*various kinds of journalisms* with necessarily multiple facets, definitions, circumstances and functions" (1, emphasis added). The unitary model is based on an assumption "that an elevated form of news works in prescribed ways to better the public good across contexts" (1). Michael Schudson's definition of journalism, for example, is unitary. "Journalism is the business or practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance" (Schudson 2003, 11). Although he acknowledges other kinds of "material" that appear in the press—reviews, sport and lifestyle columns, celebrity gossip, advice—it would, he argues, "be hard to dignify any of this as 'publically important'" (15). (And thus, not really journalism?) For many, public interest journalism is what is meant by "journalism."

John Hartley (1996, 6), by contrast, refuses to confine journalism to news, "if by that is understood the daily reporting of the political public sphere as traditionally defined … Journalism has always included coverage of the private as well as the public sphere." As feminist media scholar Lisbet van Zoonen argues, the high social status of news journalism is based on the assumption that it contains "all the elements that are necessary for the adequate functioning of the public sphere and democracy." But journalism has always had a much broader social function of providing people with information to make sense of reality, "whether in the realm of the public world, in the realm of consumer affairs or in the realm of the private" (van Zoonen 1998, 125). As Conboy (2004, 149) argues, "it is monologic, even restrictive, to attempt to close down journalism to a narrow set of explicitly political functions while ignoring the longevity of its ability to engage with the wider cultural discourses of pleasure and profitability."

Journalism then, as I am using the term, refers to more than the news of the day (be it hard or soft), more than breaking news, in fact, not just "the news" but also "the new," and sometimes "the old." This is easy to forget, as "news" is often used interchangeably with "journalism." Mitchell Stephens (2009, 6) observes, "It is almost impossible to speak of journalism today without using the word 'news' … Yet, it may be time to begin disentangling journalism from news." To do so would involve disentangling our association of news and journalism with speed and instantaneity.

Fast Journalism

In 1999, Kovach and Rosenstiel (1999, 5) provided overwhelming evidence of how the classic function of journalism, "to sort out a true and reliable account of the day's events," was being undermined by "warp speed." This was before the acceleration of online news production, before the proliferation of social media platforms and the possibilities of instantaneous networked communication. Almost 10 years later, Rosenberg and Feldman delivered an update on the problem. In *No Time to Think* they write in typically hyperbolic style, "media and inaccuracy, after a flirting through the ages, are now in a steamy lip lock" (Rosenberg and Feldman 2008, 4). Other studies confirm and extend these concerns. The pressure to produce online news in almost real-time has led to loss of accuracy and checking (Hargreaves 2003, 12), journalists who rarely leave the newsroom (Phillips 2009), and even report stories before they happen (Davies 2009). Stories are "heavily dependent on pre-packaged news" from PR material and wire services (Lewis et al. 2006, 3), a practice Davies (2009, 59) describes as "churnalism." Boczkowski's (2010) study of online news production found that speed and the expectation of instantaneity, along with real-time awareness of what the competition was doing, have led to imitation

and a paradoxical lack of diversity in news journalism even while the amount of journalism has increased. Natalie Fenton (2010, 561) describes the contemporary work ethic of news journalism as "speed it up and spread it thin."

In her study of online news culture in Finland after the school shootings in 2007 and 2008, Laura Juntunen (2010) found that the need for speed was primarily driven by three different pressures: commercial, technological, and journalistic core values of "doing it for the public … Assumed audience expectations and 'the public's right to know' are often fused together as grand legitimizing arguments in explaining the need for speed" (170), a need that has intensified under pressure from citizen journalists and social media (176). But, as Rosenberg and Feldman (2008, 17) quip: "The public's right to know has been supplanted by the public's right to know everything, however fanciful and even erroneous, as fast as technology allows."

In the flurry of speed and immediacy, the possibility of considered reflection, of narrative, of contextualized information, disappears, for both producers and consumers of journalism. Urry uses the term "the collage effect" to describe the way events in the news lose their sense of location; they share nothing in common except their newsworthiness.

> Stories from many different places and environments occur alongside each other in an often chaotic and arbitrary fashion, serving to abstract events from context and narrative. The experience of news is thus a temporally and spatially confused collage organized around instantaneously available stories simultaneously juxtaposed. (Urry 2009, 189–190)

Harrington describes how reporters endure a form of paranoia, "that we've got to produce something out of this mess and we better figure it out fast." He argues that working at high speed encourages journalists "to fall back on well-worn themes and observations—interpretive clichés—and not give ourselves the time or frame of mind to see anything beyond that" (Harrington 1997, xxiv). In his analysis of speed and media, Eriksen (2001, 70) concludes "in a free and fair competition between a slow and fast version of 'the same thing', the fast version wins. The question is what gets lost along the way. The short answer to this question is context and understanding; the longer one involves credibility."

Slow

Slow is now being called a social movement (Honore 2004), others describe it as a subculture (Rauch 2011). Parkins and Craig (2006) see Slow as a deliberate subversion of the dominance of speed in our everyday lives. The source of inspiration comes from Slow Food (SF). The movement began as a protest against fast food in Rome in 1989, with protestors sitting outside McDonalds eating bowls of penne. Carlo Petrini, the president of SF and author of many books explaining its philosophy and activities, states that SF was not just opposed to fast food, it was also "a critical reaction to the symptoms of incipient globalization" (Petrini 2001, 8). Initially, SF was concerned with preserving and fostering the produce and culture of local communities, and the conviviality of sharing locally produced seasonal food and wine. Pleasure was entwined with the Slow philosophy. The original 1989 "Manifesto for the International Movement for the Defense of and the Right to Pleasure" was re-written in 2010 with no mention of the *right* to pleasure. Even so, the pleasures enabled by slowing down remain important to SF. "Let us defend ourselves against the universal madness of 'the fast life' with tranquil material pleasure" (Slow Food 2010). Good, clean and fair is the motto.

> GOOD a fresh and flavorsome seasonal diet that satisfies the sense and is part of our local culture;
>
> CLEAN food production and consumption that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or our health;
>
> FAIR accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for small-scale producers. (Slow Food, n.d.)

For Slow Food, consumption is seen as an act of co-production. This does not necessarily mean that the consumer actually grows the food, or, if the concept is taken to media, does not necessarily produce the journalism. (Although co-production could indeed also refer to citizen journalism and crowdsourcing of information.) What Petrini means by co-production is that via education about food and its origins, the Slow consumer is "part of the production process … getting to know it, influencing it with his preferences, supporting it if it is in difficulty, rejecting it if it is wrong or unsustainable" (Petrini 2007, 165).

The core principles of SF have resonated beyond food to many areas of culture and everyday life, with implications for individual responsibility about the way we consume journalism. The question for us here is: what can the philosophy of Slow offer for the *practices* of journalism?

Slow Journalism

Different kinds of journalism have always operated at different speeds—of creation, of circulation, of time spent in consumption. If we understand "slow" in its obvious temporal sense of allowing journalists to take their time, then slow journalism has been with us since the early days of journalism: the essay (such as Montaigne's three books of essays, written and revised over the course of 22 years (1570–1592); muckraking investigative journalism (such as Nellie Bly's undercover stories in 1887 for the *New York World* about the conditions at Blackwell's Island Women's Lunatic Asylum after feigning madness there for 10 days, later published in book form as *Ten Days in a Mad-House*); long-form narrative journalism (such as John Hersey's 31,000-word article "Hiroshima" for *The New Yorker* in 1946); New Journalism (such as John Sack's 33,000-word "M" for *Esquire* in 1966) and book-length journalism, also known as literary journalism, narrative journalism, creative nonfiction (such as Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* from 2012), based on three years of interviews in the slums of Mumbai). And of course, magazines with their longer production deadlines and longer feature journalism have always produced journalism at a much slower temporality than the daily, hourly or instantaneous "press" (Hartley 2003, 252). Magazines, as app or print, also tend to spend a longer time in circulation, and tend to be read at a more leisurely pace. Seen from this perspective, slow journalism would not seem to be anything new. But as we will see, slow journalism is being used to refer to much more than temporality in production.

Susan Greenberg was the first to use the term, in an article for *Prospect* magazine (2007). She utilized the marketing concept of "the end of the middle" to apply to journalism. Long-form nonfiction, she argued, had the potential to

> end the dominance of our "fast" news culture … We get basic news cheaply, on air and online. In the middle is traditional print journalism, the sector that is losing readers. At the luxury end, there should be a growing market for essays, reportage and other non-

> fiction writing that takes its time to find things out, notice stories that others miss, and communicates it all to the highest standards: "slow journalism". (Greenberg 2007)

It is highly unlikely that the "luxury" of long-form journalism will ever have the power or reach to challenge the dominant culture of fast news. Greenberg, however, does point to some key characteristics of slow journalism. Such journalism gives time for research and writing at length, with an aim of quality—"the highest standards of story telling craft" (Greenberg 2013, 382). It offers "an alternative to conventional reporting, perceived as leaving a gap in our understanding of the world at a time when the need to make sense of it is greater than ever" (381).

So far, Greenberg's slow journalism seems to be describing nothing particularly new. It refers to long-form journalism based on quality—where quality (that troublesome word) means in-depth research, explanation, context, with well-crafted longer narratives—which could describe any number of works of long-form journalism published over the past centuries, from Twain, Dickens and Hemingway to Hunter S. Thompson and Anna Funder. More productive is Greenberg's recent argument that slow journalism would show the reader the "provenance" of information and "how it was gathered" and "to acknowledge the subjectivity and uncertainty that exists in factual discovery" within the journalism itself (Greenberg 2013, 382). Although she does not use the term, this seems to be an argument for transparency. Slow journalism would lay bare the way stories are reported, by, for example, crediting all sources, being clear about what is original journalism and what is reproduced PR copy, being clear about how information is obtained, and in digital journalism by linking readers to source documents, background research and other relevant stories (see Gillmor 2010, 70–71; Rosen 2010a).

In a recent study of the potential of slow journalism for the discussion of slower-moving stories such as climate change, Harold Gess imagines how Slow Food principles could apply to his ideal vision of slow journalism. "Good" would refer to careful research about information that is relevant to a particular community. It would be well-produced and "benefit the cultural senses" through quality. "Clean" journalism would be ethical and not corrupt or abuse the communities in which it is practiced. It would avoid stereotyping, and "support the sustainability of both ecosystems and livelihoods, support social justice, and develop a sense of a community's shared destiny." "Fair" would allow for advocacy journalism, make media accessible to the community and ensure non-exploitative working conditions (Gess 2012, 60).

On his blog "Campfire Journalism" in 2009, academic and journalist Mark Berkey-Gerard tracked recent references to slow journalism in public discourse and identified a temporary working definition. Slow journalism:

> Gives up the fetish of beating the competition.
>
> Values accuracy, quality, and context, not just being fast and first.
>
> Avoids celebrity, sensation, and events covered by a herd of reporters.
>
> Takes time to find things out.
>
> Seeks out untold stories.
>
> Relies on the power of narrative.
>
> Sees the audience as collaborators. (Berkey-Gerard 2009)

At this point, we could generalise that slow journalism requires the time for deeper reflection and/or investigation about an original subject. It is not *necessarily* long form, but usually requires length. The stylistic focus tends to be narrative storytelling, in any medium, produced to high standards of the craft. This means telling stories using narrative techniques, not just the mechanistic expository style of hard news stories.[1] Slow journalism avoids sensationalism and herd reporting. It is ethical in treatment of subjects and of producers. So far, these characteristics are not unusual in quality feature-length or longer-form journalism. The Slow approach would add that journalism should not only be factually accurate, but where possible, sources should be verifiable and traceable by consumers via methods of transparency (whether by linking or including the provenance of information and method in the text itself). The work is relevant to a particular community, with a tendency to focus on local stories. Slow journalism is not scoop driven. It carries an ethos of commensality—the shared table—implying a more communal and non-competitive approach. Effectively this means such journalism has to be produced in an independent or alternative space, probably small-scale, where such values can be realized. Some practices of slow journalism provide the opportunity for active co-production. The periodicity of its delivery is slowed down as well, increasing the pleasures in production and consumption.

The following section will analyse a number of publications that self-identify with the Slow Journalism tag. Not all share all the characteristics mentioned above—some emphasise investigation, some collaboration, some focus on local stories and community, others on in-depth narrative, while a number of publications are interrogating the association of news with speed. This journalism does not require a checklist of key characteristics to qualify as Slow. The term, like the Slow movement itself, is more a critical orientation to the effects of speed on the practice of journalism, and an experimentation with small-scale slower publishing that addresses those effects.

Investigation and Collaboration

In a forum about slow journalism at the University of Southern California's Getty Arts Journalism program in 2008, panelists discussed the non-competitive sharing of resources and how the social justice aim of journalism was lost in the pursuit of the scoop (USC Annenberg 2010). At the forum was Naka Nathaniel who described his own practice of collaborative (or co-productive) slow journalism in work he had done with Nicholas Kristof in Chad in 2006, covering genocide in Darfur. On the *New York Times* website, the journalists posted their reporting: articles, columns, videos, blog posts and links to accurate background material. They then invited readers to use the material to tell the story in their own way. "Don't feel as if it needs to be long," they wrote. "Hey, a haiku is sometimes more effective than an epic." In encouraging co-production, the aim for these slow journalists was not necessarily lengthy stories but sharing their core resources to encourage the spread of stories "too important to be told only once" (Kristof 2006). It was a short-lived experiment.

Collaboration of a different kind was behind *Help Me Investigate*, a crowd-sourced investigative journalism project started in Birmingham, UK by Paul Bradshaw in 2009. Anybody can submit a question, hyper-local or national. "Micro-volunteers" (he pointedly does not call them citizen journalists) contribute to the research process. The final result is "more process than product." Interestingly, storytelling is *not* the aim; "communication and

community" are. Bradshaw calls it "slow journalism" (Bradshaw 2009). In an interview with *The Guardian*, Bradshaw said he wanted to make the process of investigative journalism more transparent to the public. "People can contribute their expertise to answer specific questions, and journalists with no resources could use the site to call on the community for help" (Kiss 2009).

Mission and State is a non-profit investigative website, funded philanthropically, from Santa Barbara in the United States. It describes itself as "a destination website that delivers powerful, deeply reported, richly experienced narratives from Santa Barbara with local, regional and sometimes national impact." The multimedia journalism is both investigative and explanatory storytelling, and the organization is more interested in collaboration with other media outlets than in competition (*Mission and State* 2013). Executive Editor Joe Donnelly describes *Mission and State* as slow journalism.

> We have faster and faster turnaround and shorter and shorter attention spans, and fast-food type stories. But that means it's even more imperative to tell stories that have a strong emotional and intellectual impact. We've been pushing the "slow food" storytelling movement in journalism for five years now. Narrative storytelling is an experience. (INN 2013)

Long Play (*LP*) is an online Finnish start-up also focusing on investigative journalism. As in other countries, "in the age of big newsroom cuts, investigative journalism is the kind of journalism that suffers and the first to go. We call our approach slow journalism," said editor Johanna Vehkoo (IJF 2013). *LP* produces one story per month with unpaid work from eight journalists, two designers, and one photographer. Vehkoo describes the staff as "a democratic collective." *LP* is one example of the growing "e-single" phenomenon in long-form journalism where articles are sold as digital singles. At a time when most of the mainstream quality press is reducing the length of stories (Starkman 2013), *LP* is part of a new trend in alternative independent online publishing, although not all necessarily self-identify with the slow journalism tag (see e.g. *The Awl*, *Matter*, *Medium*, *Longform*, *Longreads*, *Storyboard*, *Atavist*, *Byliner*, *Zetland*, *Informant*).

Slow Storytelling

Noah Rosenberg, editor and founder of the New York-based online long-form journalism publication *Narratively*, uses the term slow journalism to describe original, quality, in-depth, human-driven stories "that might otherwise fall through the cracks." It is a response to "the insane non-stop information coming at you 24/7," he said at the Storyology conference in Sydney in 2013 (Rosenberg 2013). The stories are local, a respect for which is one of the SF principles.

> *Narratively* slows down the news cycle. We avoid the breaking news and the next big headline, instead focusing exclusively on untold, human-interest stories—the rich, intricate narratives that get at the heart of what a place and its people are all about. (*Narratively* 2013)

Each week, *Narratively* explores a different theme about a particular place and publishes one story per day, in whatever medium suits the story—animated documentary, long-form article, photo essay. "Every story gets the space and time it needs to have an impact—an approach we call 'slow storytelling' or 'slow journalism'" (*Narratively* 2013).

The free online London-based magazine *Aeon* also publishes one long-form piece of journalism each weekday in categories of Altered States, World Views, Being Human, Living Together and Nature&Cosmos. The journalism is highly researched, often academically inspired, but written in an engaging simple style. It is an editorial philosophy that the publishers term "idea egalitarianism." The magazine is published by Brigid and Paul Hains, who fund the magazine from their own resources, with enough money put aside to pay contributors at fair rates and run the site for three years without advertising.

> We saw *Aeon* as something of a corrective to the sense that a lot of people have of drowning in information. We really try to look at the deeper issues, the ideas, and the values that are animating the news, and we focus on those things in particular. (Paul Hains quoted in McKenzie 2013)

Aeon has been described as

> the publication that insists on going slow when every other force of the Internet demands that we speed up … It publishes stories based not on how many clicks their headlines might generate, but on engaging people's attention for a meaningful period of time. (McKenzie 2013)

Aeon and *Narratively* both offer a return to the periodicity of daily journalism, but slow the reading experience down even more by providing just one long story per day.

Then there is Paul Salopek, perhaps the slowest journalist of them all. In 2013 the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist began a seven-year journey retracing the global migration of human ancestors, on foot, from the birthplace of humanity in Ethiopia to Tierra del Fuego, "where our forebears ran out of horizon" (Out of Eden Walk 2013). Every 100 miles, Salopek stops and records a "Milestone" of photographs, sound and a brief interview with the nearest person. He blogs, tweets and plans to write longer pieces too. Salopek calls this "slow journalism," the process of reporting at "a human pace of three miles an hour" (as quoted in Osnos 2013). The Out of Eden Walk was designed to inspire school children around the world via the educational site The Pulitzer Centre for Crisis Reporting. Students are invited to write and share their own stories of personal journeys; educators can use the work to teach their students about storytelling and emotion (Pulitzer Centre 2013).

The publications discussed below take us somewhere else. They are practices of slow journalism that deliberately challenge the temporality and rationale of daily (or instantaneous) news. The editors and journalists of *Delayed Gratification* (*DG*), *XXI* and *De Correspondent* all respond to the "news", but by using a slower temporality of production they bring the news value of "recentness" into question.

Slow News Values

News by definition is meant to be a "fresh product … manufactured in the fastest, most routinized and efficient way possible … news, like bread, is perishable. Indeed, outdated news is also called stale" (Gans 2003, 50). But why does news *have* to be so perishable? We know one answer. "Periodicity is about economics," wrote Sommerville in 1996. This was before the accelerative force of online and social media, but his point still stands. "There can be news without it being daily, but if it were not daily, a news *industry* could never develop. The industry's capital assets would lie idle waiting for news of significance to print. Periodicity is a marketing strategy" (Sommerville 1996, 4). *DG* and *XXI* also use periodicity as a marketing strategy—but as quarterlies whose content is "news,"

this slower periodicity becomes a critique of the industrial velocity of the mainstream news industry.

In 2008, Patrick de Saint-Exupery launched the "slow news" printed quarterly magazine, *XXI*, in Paris. The editorial in the inaugural issue stated: "Taking the necessary time, shifting our own point of view, bringing back colours to the world, depth to things, presence to people. Going to see, witness, tell: these are the aims of *XXI*." The structure is 30 pages of selected "flashbacks" of shorter news stories from the preceding three months, 140 pages of longer feature journalism, 30 pages of comic strip journalism (based on No. 17, 2012). *6 Mois* is the photojournalism spin-off from *XXI*, a bi-annual 350-page print magazine, with no advertisements, giving around 30 pages to a single story. The editor, Marie-Pierre Subtil, in criticizing fast news journalism, said, "There is no time to pause on a story and understand it; decode what's going on" (as quoted in Laurent 2012). Laurent Beccaria, the manager of *6 Mois*, said, "Not everything is the immediate perpetual present where each moment cancels out the last. That's my idea of hell" (AFP 2011).

In London in 2010, two editor/journalists, Rob Orchard and Marcus Webb, joined forces as The Slow Journalism Company to launch a quarterly print news magazine entitled *Delayed Gratification*. The tag line was "last to breaking news." From Issue 6 they added a new tag line, "a new perspective on the events that mattered." Other current affairs news magazines, such as *Time* or *The Economist* or *Newsweek*, keep their periodicity close to the breaking of news, as weekly publications (print or online) with more frequent website updates. The temporal territory that *DG* raids is the three months before an issue is published. By the time *DG* arrives in the mail, there have been at least a few months between the last news it covers and the resulting published journalism.

DG uses print deliberately as a medium of slow pleasure, with online tasters on the website as marketing and subscription tool. "Print is not dead," states the opening editors' letter of every issue. "For all the wily charms of the digital world with its tweets, feeds, blogs and apps there is still nothing like the pleasure created by ink on paper." The choice of medium is also based, surprisingly perhaps, on sustainability. The magazine uses Forest Stewardship Council-approved paper and a printer registered to the ISO 14001 environmental standard. The longevity and beauty of the object encourages collectability rather than disposability and the fact that back issues of *DG* are available for sale until the print run is sold means that this magazine can be environmentally more sustainable than mainstream print magazines with their high pulp rate as soon as an issue goes off sale. (*XXI* also sells its back issues.)

Without "the albatross of an hourly deadline around their necks," the editors take time to make their content choices and commissioning of original material after immersion in three months of world news. In an interview with me in London on July 4, 2011, Orchard said:

> It's not the super speedy journalism that forms the vast majority of the backdrop of all the media at the moment. It's not that 24/7 rolling news, got to fill the pages, got to fill the content, tweeting from inside of courtrooms, immediate perspective and immediate analysis … if you take your time to do something you can, not necessarily do it better, but do it in a different way.

The aim, says the editors' letter, is "picking out patterns, and seeing what is left after the dust has settled," stripping out "the white noise." *DG* offers a mix of longer features (some based on recent news, some of a more "timeless" nature), expert columns,

innovative data journalism graphics, with a sidebar running through the issue with a brief news highlight from each day of the preceding three months. Because *DG* is independent, funded not by advertising but by expensive cover price and subscriptions, making money is not the prime motivation—although, as for many independent publishers, without a profit eventually the magazine will fold. At this point, however, *DG* manages to pay its contributors at award rates; the editors have other day jobs.

The editors cannot select stories using the usual news values. Instead, they use the magazine version of news values known as the "editorial philosophy" that specifies the style, content area and approach of a magazine. And that, for *DG*, is the question: what really mattered in the news? The only way this can be answered is by slowing news time down. The inspiration for *DG* came from Orchard and Webb's own response to the surfeit of news media. Even as journalists, whose job it was to keep up with the news flow, they felt overwhelmed. In our interview, Orchard said:

> Everybody has a very busy life and you've got a couple of 20-minute windows in your day when you want to catch up with what's going on. But how on earth are you supposed to filter that when it's coming at you through Facebook and Twitter and three or four main news services you like to look at and the billion blogs you like to monitor, how can you possibly get on top of that? A lot of people feel like giving up.

It is a common refrain. Thomas Eriksen notes,

> there is no scarcity of information in the information society. There is far too much of it. With no opportunity to filter away that available information which one does not need, one is lost and will literally drown in zeros and ones. (Eriksen 2001, 105)

In his history of information, James Gleick (2011, 409–410) concludes, "strategies emerge for coping … the harassed consumer of information turns to filters to separate the metal from the dross." The slow editing of slow journalism can provide that filter. Given the extraordinary scope of reality that occurs in three months, it is quite a feat for editors to select the news that mattered. And because *DG* and *XXI* are quarterlies, readers know the final selection cannot re-present *all* that happened. The illusion of daily news is that we have been provided with "all the news that's fit to print," and the illusion of constantly updated online news is that we can tap into everything happening as long as we keep clicking—but the reality is the gut instinct application of news values by editors, and a secrecy in the decision-making process to feed this illusion of total coverage. In their slowness, *DG* and *XXI* make the role of the editor transparent.

A different "slow" critique of news comes from *De Correspondent*, a crowd-funded for-profit multi-media Dutch-language "news" website that launched in the Netherlands in September 2013, funded by subscribers rather than advertisers. Its manifesto states it is "daily, but beyond the issues of the day. From news to new" (*De Correspondent* 2013a). It offers a slower approach to the news by avoiding the daily news cycle of breaking news. Stories are published each day, but the focus is background, analysis, investigative reporting, writing at length. "I don't believe in 'the news' in the objective sense of the word," said publisher Rob Wijnberg. "You can describe the world in infinite ways, and 'the news' happens to be one of them" (as quoted in Witschge 2013). If the news was your only source of information about the world, he said, "you'd end up knowing exactly how the world doesn't work" (*De Correspondent* 2013b). The news value of "relevance" replaces "recentness" as the basis for story selection. One correspondent, for example, the journalist

and author Jelle Brandt Courstius, described his role as to focus on one place in the Netherlands each month. "This might be a place where the news circus has already left, but it could also be a place where something interesting is happening at too slow a pace to make it into the news—like the depopulation of a provincial village in Zeeland" (as quoted in Witschge 2013).

Wijnberg expects his correspondents to be "factual, accurate, and fair" but they are not expected to be "objective automatons" who "hide the surprise, hope, anger, or enthusiasm that gave rise to this reporting in the first place." Transparency will also be incorporated into stories by "taking the ways in which news media shape our perceptions of events into account in its own reporting" (*De Correspondent* 2013a). Wijnberg criticizes the voice of traditional "objective" journalism (the approach that Rosen [2010b] calls the "view from nowhere"). "I want the correspondents to make their choices explicit," said Wijnberg. "What do they think is important, and why should readers care about it? You do that by making clear that you're not following an objective news agenda, but a subjective journey through the world" (as quoted in Witschge 2013).

The practices of slow news journalism discussed above prompt us, as readers, to ask questions such as "how much news do I need?," "when do I need it?" and "what really matters in the news?" They prompt, in short, questions that can lead to a slower, more critical consumption of journalism. The questions come not just intellectually but experientially. Reading old news is affectively dislocating. Eerily familiar, strangely distant, a reminder of events that we had almost or possibly forgotten, the important news reassuringly still present and reinforced in memory. As Gleick suggests, "the information that matters sometimes comes the next day or the next month, when there is time to digest and interpret" (quoted in Dowd 2013).

Conclusion

TMI (too much information), information overload, informed bewilderment, communicative abundance, the attention economy … the catchphrases express a general feeling that we are overwhelmed by information, and not least by journalism. In the speed of the "media torrent," writes Todd Gitlin (2007, 115), "the images steadily thicken, the soundscape grows noisier, montages more frenetic … the prospect of unending, out-of-control acceleration is unnerving." One response is fatigue, indifference, apathy. As Orchard said, "a lot of people feel like giving up," especially the young. A recent large study found that 37 percent of 18–34-year-olds from a sample across nine nations said "they do not seek information, on a regular basis, from any news medium, compared with only 13 percent of those aged over 54-years-old" (Curran et al. 2013, 884). Might a slower approach to journalism with its emphasis on quality, pleasure, storytelling and a focus on what matters to particular communities be one way to engage a distracted, overloaded, disinterested audience? Or is this just elitist, "nostalgic modernism" pining after a simpler slower existence?

Some critics would say exactly that. John Keane, for example, would situate slow journalism as a "backlash ideology" produced in reaction to "high intensity communication." Such an ideology "fears the consequences of information overload and mourns the death of informed, rational debate. Nostalgic modernism blames viewers', listeners' and readers' indigestion on multimedia … it calls on governments and citizens to invent schemes for reducing information" (Keane 1997). To suggest that Slow is just a reactionary escape from communicative abundance is to misunderstand the complexity of the

movement. As Ben Agger (2004) explains, slow and fast co-exist, dialectically. The goal of a slower life has to be situated *within* the present, using information technologies "to decelerate the pace of existence" (149). The examples of slow journalism discussed above all utilize the possibilities of the latest ICTs—but they use them with the "considered reflection which takes time and requires distance from its object" (147). For the consumers of journalism, especially now that consumers can be active producers as well, a slower approach to journalism, far from being reactionary, could be considered a practice of responsible citizenship. There is a time for speed, as the tweeting during the uprisings in the Middle East has shown. But there is also a time when responding slowly is the wiser course of action.

After the Boston bombing in 2013, Mike Ananny (and many others) documented how instantaneous mobile technologies had led to false, dangerously distracting information from both traditional and non-traditional journalists, motivated by the competitive desire to be first with the "news" and the thoughtless desire to speak at any cost. "The ideal press should be about more than this," he wrote.

> It should be about demonstrating robust answers to two inseparable questions: Why do you need to *know* something now? And why do you need to *say* something now? Both questions demand awareness of what *not* to say, and when *not* to say it" (Ananny 2013)

Although he did not use the term, Ananny was making an argument for the considered silence and timing of slow journalism as one way to improve the quality and accuracy of public discourse.

Slow journalism promises what Mitchell Stephens has recently called "wisdom" journalism: "an amalgam of the more rarified forms of reporting—exclusive, investigative—with more informed, more interpretive, more explanatory, even more impressionistic or opinionated takes on current events" (Stephens 2009, 4); and with a good dose of pleasurable narrative style. None of the above experiments in slow journalism imagine themselves as a replacement for fast journalism or as the future of journalism. Their small-scale independence allows freedom from mainstream journalism organizations and their competitive drive for profit and ideology of journalistic velocity. Like the advocates of slow living, there is no desire to impose slowness on everyone. "Rather they propose that an alternative to speed be made possible, thinkable, do-able; that spaces for slowness be allowed" (Parkins 2004, 367).

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NOTE

1. "The common term in the news media industry is 'hard news' writing where what the journalist (or their editor) deems to be the most important piece of information is put in the lead paragraph and each following paragraph contains information in descending level of importance. The tone is formal and tethered to the institutional voice of the newspaper" (Ricketson 2010).

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