

FORM, STYLE AND JOURNALISTIC STRATEGIES

AN INTRODUCTION

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Form and style matter in journalism. To a large extent a newspaper's identity is determined by its appearance and its tone. Readers want to feel comfortable with a paper's design, its departmentalization and its use of illustrations, colour and headlines. The style of writing and the form of stories should please them. 'Reading someone else's newspaper is like sleeping with someone else's wife', Malcolm Bradbury observed in his novel *Stepping Westward*. 'Nothing seems to be precisely in the right place, and when you find what you are looking for, it is not clear then how to respond to it'.¹ People need to be at ease with their newspapers or they risk alienation.

The use of conventions of form and style is not however, simply a question of identity and outward appearance. While the content of news changes every day, form and style assure the ritual function of news. Both are essential in making people believe events are real. Journalism is a performative discourse which aims to impose and legitimize valid representations of the social world. The process of gathering, selecting and presenting news is mostly based on unnoticed and undisputed conventions and professional routines. Firstly, these principles and practices determine which parts of reality are represented in the media – in other words, which facts fit the form. Secondly, the form chosen determines how news is framed – the same facts can be used to construct many diverse stories. Michael Schudson argues that the power of journalism mainly lies in its ability to provide the forms in which things are declared to be true. Conventions of form and style determine, therefore, which stories are told and how they are told. By doing so they determine how we experience the world. Schudson speaks in this respect of the politics of narrative form.²

Studying the emergence and historical development of form and style conventions deepens our understanding of how journalism works. It shows

¹ Bradbury, *Stepping Westward*. Cited in Barnhurst, *Seeing the Newspaper*, p. 195.

² Schudson, *The Power of News*, p. 54. Cf. Carey, 'The Problem of Journalism History', pp. 3-5, 27.

how newspapers work as 'social maps', how they construct meaning, how they articulate social worlds and how they build communities. It stresses how societies are shaped by representations of social reality through journalistic media. Professional conventions and routines, and the articles which flow from them, reflect the cultural and ideological values of a society at a given period. To be respected, journalists have to obey the rules of their profession. This is why, Schudson argues, we have to 'recognize the substantive message and substantial authority of narrative form' to understand media.³ We could add that we have to do the same to understand society.

Nevertheless, until recently, form and style did not receive the attention they deserved in media history. Media history used an institutional framework for a long time. It focused on the organizational, political, technological and economic aspects of the press. The development of newspaper business, ownership and editorial organization has been extensively studied. The same applies to the relationship between press, government and politics in the public sphere, and the political and social stands taken by newspapers. Illustrative of this is the organization of the important volume *Newspaper History*, edited by James Curran, George Boyce and Pauline Wingate, which was published in 1978. It contains a section on the structure, ownership and control of the press, a section on the organization and occupation of journalism, and a section on press, politics and society.⁴ This institutional approach laid the empirical foundation that made the shift to a broader cultural framework possible.

Four years earlier, James Carey criticized exactly this kind of press history as 'something of an embarrassment'. In a seminal article on 'the problem of journalism history' he stated that press historians had 'defined our craft too narrowly and too modestly'. He complained about the overrepresentation of institutional histories which did not shed light on journalism, journalists and news processes, and instead he argued that a cultural approach be adopted. Carey wanted to focus on the 'history of reporting'. He suggested studying the emergence and development of journalistic practices and forms which aimed to represent social reality at a given moment.⁵

In the last twenty to thirty years, the focus of study has indeed shifted towards journalistic practices, conventions and routines. The emergence of journalism as a profession, centred on notions such as objectivity and neutrality, was extensively studied in various national contexts. Under the influence of the social sciences, media history paid more attention to the systematic analysis of media content. The study of form and style in journal-

³ Schudson, *The Power of News*, p. 71.

⁴ Curran, Boyce and Wingate, *Newspaper History*; O'Malley, 'Media History'.

⁵ Carey, 'The Problem of Journalism History'.

ism, in the form I would suggest it takes, explores both approaches by putting texts in context. This approach does not accord importance to the particular content of a news item, but to the news item itself – how it is structured and written, how it is presented to readers and how it fits into larger thematic discourses. Furthermore, how and why a news item is produced the way it is demands study.

While the content of an article is unique and incidental, its form is more universal and refers to broader cultural discourses, and accepted and widely-used news conventions and routines. The content of news items is bound to their national context, while forms and styles tend to travel internationally. They are intensively transferred from one country to another and adapted to national contexts. This process of cultural diffusion reveals how journalistic conventions and routines are influenced by the culture in which they function.⁶ Journalism has to appeal to the needs of its audience – at least in countries where the press is commercially funded. This makes the study of form and style in journalism pre-eminently transnational and comparative. Comparative research can stress the national and cultural peculiarities of journalism and can explain differences between the development of journalistic practices, conventions and routines in various countries.

Media history is often studied from within a teleological framework predetermined by pre-dominantly Anglo-American notions such as press freedom, objectivity, balance, impartiality, and the distinction between facts and fiction. This diminishes the existence and influence of other journalistic styles that are not centred on news facts and objectivity but on literature, reflection and opinion, and which have long been very much alive in European journalism. Kevin Williams observes that some scholars go so far as to declare ‘that what preceded the advent of Anglo-American journalism was not journalism’. By doing so they create a dichotomy which cannot easily be bridged and which has held back serious analysis of other styles and forms in their own right by denying them membership of the domain of *journalism*. Too often they are interpreted as merely necessary stages in the development of journalism as an ‘independent’ profession, as steps towards modernization.

Since the late nineteenth century, the fact-centred Anglo-American news style, with conventions such as the summary lead and the headline, forms such as the investigative report and the interview, and practices such as interviewing and beat reporting, has become the dominant model for newspapers in democratic societies. Eventually this style was adopted by European newspapers, though slowly and not without hesitation. Journalists and the public demonstrated stiff, culturally-based resistance to the Anglo-

⁶ Cf. Høyer and Pottker, *Diffusion of the News Paradigm 1850-2000*.

American journalistic style which only became accepted when adapted to national cultural standards. By carefully studying the diffusion of journalistic conventions and routines, and by examining the processes of cultural adaptation, media historians can prevent their research from being biased by the outcome of this process of 'absorption of Anglo-American practice, style and form' in journalism, as Williams describes it in the first chapter of this volume.

Research into journalistic forms and styles also opens all kinds of possibilities for interdisciplinary research. Media studies have no common approach or methodology. News is studied in the context of various research disciplines – history, sociology, language studies, political science and cultural analysis, to name the most important.⁷ The most significant split seems to be that between the humanities and the social sciences. Both fields have their own institutions, their own methodological framework and their own discourse. In general, media historians have been cautious about the quantitative methods of the social sciences, and communication studies in particular. As Jack Levy put it: historians 'seek to understand single unique events, the *milieu et moment*', while social scientists 'aim to generalize about classes of events'. Historians 'tend to favour complex explanations', while social scientists 'aim for elegant and parsimonious explanations'. Historians 'construct narrative-based explanations'; social scientists 'construct theory-based explanations'. Social scientists 'are explicit about their theoretical assumptions and causal argument; historians are more implicit.'⁸

However, in my opinion an intertwining of research methods from the social sciences, from history and from the study of literature can be extremely fruitful. Content analysis and textual analysis can broaden the empirical basis of media history, which too often lacks a systematic analysis of newspaper content. In other cases, conclusions can be based on the examination of a fairly small number of copies. Historical research examining records and published material can explain the findings using textual analysis, and place these in context. As I see it, a text can be fully understood only with reference to a number of the contexts that framed it.⁹ The theme of form and style in journalism offers a platform on which historians, scholars from the social sciences and scholars from language studies and literary studies can meet.

This volume addresses the usefulness of journalistic forms and styles as leading concepts for the analysis of media history. The essays included explore and elucidate both concepts in two ways. The first six contributions

⁷ Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*, p. 8.

⁸ Cited in Bennett, 'Case Study Methods', p. 38.

⁹ Cf. Shapiro and Markoff, 'A Matter of Definition'.

discuss the emergence of the Anglo-American news style and its adaptation in Germany, Scandinavia and the Netherlands. They also examine the reflective journalistic style which preceded and accompanied 'new' and 'modern' Anglo-American journalism. The other essays concentrate on the form of news in France, the United States, Serbia and the Netherlands. They discuss the journalistic, cultural and ideological frameworks which underlie the use of specific forms and they show that journalists and writers attempted to attain professional and political goals using journalistic strategies. The links between the cases presented are fairly loose. They offer a comparative and interdisciplinary mosaic which invites rearrangement and complementation.

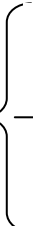
Style: Routines and Practices

Drawing the distinction between what is said (content) and how it is said (form and style) is highly artificial, if not impossible. This emphasizes the interdependence of thought and its expression. As we have seen, the form and style of a news article and its content are to a large extent entwined. They affect each other – form and style determine which facts are included in and which are omitted from a reporter's story. To attempt a clear distinction is not very helpful as it is precisely the tension between form and style on the one hand and content on the other that makes these concepts useful for analysing media content. To use form and style as sensitizing concepts might then be a practical solution – but this method is not very satisfying. It seems more useful to make a clear distinction between the concepts and to define them.

Style in journalism can be defined as 'the choice between functionally equivalents of language'. As Allan Bell puts it: 'a "that way" which could have been chosen instead of a "this way" ... and these different ways of speaking can carry different social meanings'.¹⁰ Style refers to practices and the routines which underlie them. Routines are cultural values commonly shared by groups of journalists. They determine what journalism is and what it should be to a specific group – what news is and how a journalist should act. What is included in or excluded from stories is to a large extent determined by routines. They offer the ideological framework which lies behind the process of gathering, selecting and presenting news.

Style is to a large extent not a personal quality of an individual journalist. This is contrary to what is often suggested by commentators, for example, in the well-known aphorism: *le style, c'est l'homme*. No one would question that some journalists are gifted and others poor stylists. However,

¹⁰ Matheson, 'The birth of news discourse', p. 560.

Style	Reflective style (discursive)	Partisan Model
	News style 	Information Model (discursive; quality papers)
		Story Model (narrative; popular papers)
		Trustee Model
		Market Model

some literary-oriented ‘schools of writing’, such as naturalism or new journalism, became very influential. Also, once journalism became a distinct occupation, practices, routines and conventions which facilitated quick and reliable production were standardized. Writing increasingly had little to do with personal genius or literary talents. It was organized primarily in accordance with industrial patterns and became formularized: ‘a skill anyone could learn’.¹¹ Through socialization in the newsroom, journalists relate to shared sets of rules – sometimes laid down in style guides – which structure their stories.

By using a specific style, newspapers position themselves in the media landscape, this being how they construct their identities. It might thus be useful to first distinguish between styles and then classify them according to the question of whether they can be characterized as mainly discursive or narrative. A narrative style focuses on representations ‘of an event or a series of events’.¹² News stories, reportages and even interviews – inasmuch as they represent the event of the interview itself – thus qualify as narratives. After all, even the most basic and concise news article tells a story about an event and the characters taking part in the action. A discursive style emphasizes the use of genres reflecting on news facts or more precisely, those which reflect on the narratives which represent these news

¹¹ Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News*, p. 126.

¹² Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, p. 12.

facts. Editorials or background articles, for example, describe, explain and analyse what has happened and comment upon the news. Of course, narrative and discursive features are present in any newspaper – the differences are a matter of degree.

In a classification of styles, a first division would be that between the reflective style and the news style (see figure 1). In scholarly studies on the form and style of journalism, less attention is paid to discursive articles. While the moral connotation of these genres is omnipresent it seems more obvious and valuable to study their content rather than their formal and stylistic devices. I would like to argue that they nevertheless structure social reality through the use of specific forms.

The reflective style has its roots in partisan journalism, which wanted to educate, instruct and persuade its readers of certain political or sociocultural views. This partisan approach saw the journalists tell their readers what they needed to know from the point of view of a political party or a social movement. Reporting news was considered of less importance than judging the social world from the standpoint of a political or social movement.

This style was first and foremost discursive. It was centred on opinions and analysis – views rather than news was its credo. Reporters were held in low esteem, being despised as clerks who merely noted what happened and quoted other people. There was still a close connection with the literary field. True journalists wrote down their vision of the world in measured terms and superb literary style – they added ‘intelligence raisonnée’ to the facts. Literary techniques were used to strengthen the performative power of discursive articles. The organizing principle of these pieces was ‘the mediating subjectivity of the journalist’, as Jean Chalaby puts it in a comparison of French and Anglo-American journalism. Applying the reflective style, ‘journalists did not only wrap information into their own observations but constructed their articles according to their interpretation of the related events, thus mediating between readers and reality’.¹³

While the reflective style was organized around opinions, the news style that emerged in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s was centred on facts. According to Sverre Høyer and Horst Pöttker, ‘new American journalism’ introduced five new elements to journalism. *News value* instead of political bias became the basis of selection. An increased speed of news supply, triggered by the introduction of the telegraph, caused the emergence of a *24 hour news cycle*. To be new, events had to have occurred since the paper’s last publication. The *news interview* became the most important tool for the new reporter to gather fast and reliable information. Stories were

¹³ Chalaby, ‘Journalism’, pp. 303-326, pp. 309, 311-312.

structured by using the *inverted pyramid* formula and contained a summary lead. Finally, *objectivity* became the moral norm for reporting.¹⁴

The emergence of the Anglo-American news style had much to do with the rise of a commercial press and a highly competitive market, as Kevin Williams and Sverre Høyer illustrate in this volume. This kind of journalism could only appear in democratic societies with no juridical and financial impediments. In the 1830s the American press grew into a press for the masses. The spread of literacy and technological innovations in newsprint production, printing and distribution created profitable market conditions, while the growth of mass democracy, urbanization and the rise of a consumer society increased demand for the news. Editors leapt to fill the needs of the 'democratic market society' which had emerged.¹⁵ In reaching for a mass market they were encouraged to take a non-partisan though not necessarily neutral stand in the race to increase their readership.

The news style can be used in a story model and in an information model. Both approaches remained present in journalism, as Kevin Williams stresses in his contribution to this volume. He argues that the rise of Anglo-American journalism should be seen as 'an eternal debate about expansion of mass culture and the deep-seated ideological divisions between satisfying public wants and educating and improving the public taste'. Or as Kevin Barnhurst puts it, journalism has to balance 'authority with popular appeal', and in this the style of a newspaper and the forms it uses, act as guides between 'those opposing poles'.¹⁶

The story model primarily has a narrative character. Newspapers that stress their storytelling function seek to create for readers 'satisfying aesthetic experiences which help them to interpret their own lives and to relate them to the nation, town, or class to which they belong'. They follow the market and try to please their readers and advertisers. Usually these newspapers are labelled as popular or sensationalist. They tend to use an emotionally-involving style, often characterized as sensationalism, that aims to appeal to the emotions of their readers.¹⁷

The information model is primarily discursive. Newspapers adhering to this model seek to transmit information and favour the rational, empirical ideals of objectivity, balance, fairness and neutrality. Journalists consider themselves professionals who 'provide news they believe citizens should have to be informed participants in democracy'. Generally, newspapers op-

¹⁴ Høyer and Pottker, *Diffusion of the News Paradigm*, pp. 9-16. See also the contributions of Sverre Høyer and Kevin Williams to this volume.

¹⁵ Schudson, *Discovering the News*.

¹⁶ Barnhurst, *Seeing the Newspaper*, p. 172.

¹⁷ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, pp. 89-90; Broersma, 'Botsende Stijlen'.

erating on the basis of this trustee model are labelled quality papers. They employ a restrained and detached style which does not reach for the hearts of their readers but tries to appeal to their minds. The trustee model embodies the professional ideology dominant in journalism today.¹⁸

Objectivity became the central norm in Anglo-American journalism, as Kevin Williams argues in his analysis of its emergence and development. To distinguish itself from the political and the literary fields, journalism concentrated on facts and information, and presented itself as a neutral and independent guardian of public interest. In the United States, objectivity was firmly established as a leading norm in the 1920s. Journalism affiliated itself with the rising public demand for facts as a basis for rational choices and actions. This need was stimulated by scientific progress and changes in the political culture which transformed voting from a partisan activity to a rational act. Furthermore, journalism, as an emerging profession, needed to distinguish itself from propaganda and the PR industry. In addition, the objectivity norm supplied craft rules making it easier for editors to discipline reporters to conform to the industrial patterns of mass newspaper production. A single news style emerged which made reporters into 'machines, without prejudice, colour, and without style'.¹⁹

After the 1890s the Anglo-American news style spread across Europe. The journalism we are familiar with today has even been described as an 'Anglo-American invention'.²⁰ This process of diffusion required two preconditions. There had to be a substantial market for newspapers and the political system had to be democratic. This is why diffusion progressed along the lines of the three media systems which Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini distinguish.²¹ Great Britain is included in the North Atlantic or liberal model. This model is characterized by the early development of a mass-circulation press, the early professionalization of journalism and its neutral and commercial character. It is market oriented and the state removed legal impediments comparatively early in the nineteenth century. Great Britain was fertile ground for the 'new American journalism', as it was called. With hindsight, the news style has been dubbed 'Anglo-American' though British journalism had much in common with European journalism. Initially, it was just as reluctant to accept this news style as the continental newspapers. Michael Schudson characterizes British journalism as 'a kind of a half-way

¹⁸ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, pp. 89-90; *idem*, 'What public journalism knows about journalism but doesn't know about "public"', p. 119; Broersma, 'Bot-sende Stijlen'.

¹⁹ Schudson, 'The objectivity norm in American journalism', pp. 158-162; Matheson, 'The birth of news discourse', p. 565.

²⁰ Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism*.

²¹ Hallin and Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*.

house between American professionalism and continental traditions of party-governed journalism with high literary aspirations'. British new journalism of the 1880s aimed to make newspapers more readable but strongly emphasized the role of the press as the Fourth Estate.²²

Newspapers adhering to the northern European or democratic corporatist model were even more hesitant about what they called 'Americanization'. Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries exhibited the characteristics of this model. They traditionally had a strong party press, which was opinion-based and non-commercial. Moreover, there was severe state intervention in the press. Close connections between newspapers and political parties or social movements, and strict press control by the government curbed the speed of commercialization and the rise of a mass-circulation press. The Anglo-American news style and its practices were, as we have seen, closely connected to professionalization and commercialization.²³ Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain and France are included in the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model, though France is a borderline case as it also displays characteristics of the democratic corporatist model. Newspaper circulation was low in these countries – their economies were underdeveloped, and journalism had strong political roots and weaker professional standards. There was strong state intervention which hindered the rise of a commercial press for much longer than in the other areas. Newspapers in countries fitting this model were the most unwilling to adopt the Anglo-American news style.

Both the northern European and the Mediterranean models of journalism used reflective styles in the late nineteenth century. Newspapers were centred on opinions, analysis and, especially in France, literature. Reporting news facts was poorly regarded. Professional journalists considered themselves more literary artists or intellectuals than craftsmen. European newspaper writing primarily sought to inform and educate. Articles were preferably written as essays, in contrast to the concise American news reports which used summary leads containing the most important news facts (the inverted pyramid). Because American journalism was fact-centred, it was considered stylishly poor and unattractive. Emile Zola, for example, wrote in 1894 that it was regrettable that 'the uncontrolled flow of information pushed to the extreme ... has transformed journalism, killed the great articles of discussion, killed literary critique, and increasingly gives more importance to news dispatches, trivial news, and to articles of reporters and interviewers'.²⁴

²² Schudson, 'The objectivity norm', p. 167; Wiener, *Papers for the Millions*.

²³ Cf. Høyer and Pottker, *Diffusion of the News Paradigm*.

²⁴ Chalaby, 'Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention', p. 309.

Journalists and the elite in most European countries distrusted Americanization.²⁵ In a broader discourse it was seen as cultural degeneration and as a terrifying consequence of modernization. They showed strong cultural resistance to Anglo-American journalism. In their arguments they focused on the story model and paid little or no attention to the information model. By doing so they were able to proscribe the news style's emphasis on the spectacular and sensational, and its appeal to the emotions. It was linked to commercialization and sensationalism, both of which were to be rejected. Opinion leaders thought the introduction of American practices and conventions would cause social upheaval and were afraid that the standards of journalism would drop if the American focus on news was adopted. Interviewing, for example, was viewed as a 'monstrous departure from the dignity and propriety of journalism'.²⁶

However, these journalistic innovations seemed to offer a formula for reaching the masses. Press barons such as Lord Northcliffe in Great Britain, Henrik Cavling in Denmark and Hak Holdert in the Netherlands considered the new style to be a promising tool for attracting readers. Journalists and the general public were ambivalent, as a French commentator observed: 'Le goût de l'information rapide, sèche, nette, est anglo-américain. Il plaît au goût français mais ne le contente pas complètement ...'.²⁷ Nonetheless, in the course of the twentieth-century European countries adopted the new practices, routines and conventions one by one. They were adapted, moderated and transformed within the confines of the bourgeois and political press – a process which took decades. It started in Great Britain, then took off in the northern European countries and finally reached the Mediterranean. In most cases one newspaper, or a small number, took the lead in this process of so-called 'Americanization'. What strengthened the arguments of the opponents of this news style was that these frontrunners used the story model.

In the Netherlands, as Mariëtte Wolf shows in her contribution to this volume, the popular daily *De Telegraaf* was a frontrunner. It was founded in 1893 and tried to imitate the *Daily Telegraph*, which was very successful in London. Hak Holdert became the first Dutch press baron, and his editorial staff modelled their paper on Anglo-American traditions. *De Telegraaf* introduced new genres such as the interview and the special report. It considered reporting to be far more important than did other newspapers. It wanted to attract the masses with sensationalist topics such as crime and fraud, human interest stories and an emotional and involving style: 'News

²⁵ Broersma, 'Botsende Stijlen'; Requate, 'Protesting against "America"', p. 205.

²⁶ Silvester, *The Penguin Book of Interviews*, p. 7.

²⁷ Albert, 'La presse française de 1871 à 1940', p. 278.

as it is, written in the language of life, by people who fully live life'. The hunt for news by these 'bandit-knights of the press' was considered indecent by most journalists, who favoured a reflective style. By the 1920s, however, the elements of Anglo-American journalism that *De Telegraaf* had introduced had been adopted by other Dutch newspapers. One of their editors wrote regretfully that 'everything was copied'.

The same transition occurred in other European countries. Sweden's *Dagens Nyheter* and France's *Le Matin*, for example, took the lead. Bourgeois papers and the party press followed reluctantly.²⁸ The diffusion of the Anglo-American news style is examined in this volume by three national case studies dealing with Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands. This process started in these countries in the 1880s and 1890s, though the pace of developments differed. However, in most European countries the transfer of the Anglo-American news style and its adaptation within the respective national contexts was only completed in the years after the Second World War.²⁹

Svennik Høyer argues that between the 1880s and 1920s the demand for newspapers in Denmark, Finland and Norway grew. However, newspapers did not become less partisan with the rise of circulation, as occurred in the United States. Rather, the reverse occurred – a party press was born. In the process of democratization which characterized Scandinavian political culture, commitment to a political party was seen as a sign of independence and professional autonomy. Objectivity as a journalistic norm did not fit with the political and cultural context. Other features of the Anglo-American news style, such as the inverted pyramid, were adopted but did not become widely used until the Second World War.

As Jürgen Wilke shows, shock therapy was needed in Germany to stimulate the adaptation of the Anglo-American news style. Wilke labels the German journalism of the late nineteenth century as 'belated'. Freedom of the press was guaranteed in 1874, while a state monopoly on advertisements weakened the economic position of newspapers. Only in the 1880s and 1890s were a substantial number of partisan and commercial newspapers founded. While the party papers wanted to instruct, persuade and educate their readers, the *General-Anzeigers*, as the commercial dailies were called, aimed to reach the masses. Wilke argues that two characteristics of German journalism postponed the adoption of Anglo-American journalism in Germany. On the one hand, papers were mainly sold by subscription, so attractiveness and scoops were less important. On the other hand, anonymity hin-

²⁸ Broersma, 'Botsende Stijlen'; Ekecrantz, 'News paradigms', pp. 98-99; Cf. the chapter by Mariëtte Wolf in this volume.

²⁹ Cf. Albert, 'La presse Française', p. 278.

dered journalists from distinguishing themselves and made it easy for them to hide behind their mediocrity. The prominence of the partisan model was reversed by the American and British occupying forces after the Second World War. Their re-education aimed to bring about the strict separation of news and opinion. Though on the face of it this seems to have been a success, German journalists stuck tenaciously to partisan traditions. They considered commentary an essential element of their professional identity.

Huub Wijffjes examines the careful 'modernization' of Dutch journalism between 1870 and 1914. In the Netherlands the sensationalist and emotional style of the American and British mass press was condemned. As in Germany, journalism was based on partisan views and commentary, and on the civic ideal of working in the public interest. A contemplative and literary style of writing fitted these professional principles. Reporting gained ground in the late nineteenth century with journalists being inspired by the French naturalist movement that sought to grasp life as it was. The 'new' reporters went undercover to experience social reality themselves, while the political portrait explored the 'mood, sphere or ambiance' of parliamentary life. The introduction of the interview made the creation of news possible. The renewal of Dutch journalism was inspired both by the analytical and independent reporting of British newspapers, and the literary style of French journalism, Wijffjes argues.

The transition in journalism in the Netherlands was preceded by the development of its colonial press. Colonial newspapers, in contrast to the home press, were strictly non-partisan. Censorship forced them to be market oriented at a time when this orientation was still despised in the motherland. The newspaper market in the colonies was small and the editors' salaries were related to the copies sold. This caused fierce competition for readers, who considered papers as welcome distractions from a dull and limited cultural life. Janny de Jong examines the 'tropical style' of the Dutch language newspapers in the Netherlands Indies from 1869 to 1906. Their style was polemical, 'peppered, personal and direct', and had many characteristics of the 'new journalism' that arose in Great Britain in the 1850s. De Jong examines the work of three innovative editors in detail. Conrad Busken Huet introduced a literary style to the colonial press. Following the French journalistic tradition, he stressed the cultural role of the newspaper – he wanted to educate his readers. P.A. Daum was well known for his narrative talents, which he demonstrated in his novels and the reports in his paper, while Pieter Brooshooft advocated fact-centred and investigative journalism. In general, the colonial press was characterized by its lively style and accessible nature.

The political, partisan background of journalism was not alone in determining its style. Journalism also had roots in the literary field. Research

into the intertwinement of journalism and literature can provide many insights into the development of journalistic styles. In the late nineteenth century, journalism was still closely connected with literature. Many literati wrote for newspapers and magazines to earn money and promote their work. The media attracted readers by publishing novels, and gained respectability by employing writers and intellectuals. As a result, journalism drew many stylistic features from literature. This connection was extremely important in French journalism, as Jean Chalaby demonstrated. The fact that writers occupied influential positions prevented the emergence of a specific journalistic discourse. Until an independent journalistic field arose in the twentieth century, literary norms and values structured journalism. According to Chalaby, 'the French journalistic style bore the mark of its literary origins for a long time'. The innovative techniques introduced by French journalists were imported and adapted in various European countries.³⁰

In this volume Marieke Dubbelboer and Ilja van den Broek explore the entwinement of journalism and literature in France and the Netherlands. Dubbelboer argues that news and journalistic conventions strongly influenced the literary work of the French playwright Alfred Jarry (1873-1907). In his 'speculative journalism', Jarry criticized the representation of reality in newspapers. Instead of paying attention to conventional themes such as politics, religion or the arts he emphasized *faits divers*. This trivial news had literary value to him – the bizarre sketches he wrote had to elucidate the social world. By speculating on what could possibly happen, by exaggerating and turning things around, he investigated social relations and human behaviour. He called attention to the process of representation in newspapers and forced his readers to take a critical look at the facts that journalists declared to be true. By doing so he exposed the limitations of newspaper language and common journalistic conventions. His hilarious accounts of current events provide a 'counter-discourse', as Dubbelboer puts it. Studying this discourse reveals much about nineteenth-century journalism in France.

Ilja van den Broek stresses the purposes of realism in literature and journalism. She argues that the realistic novel and journalistic reportage were politically funded and did not attempt to provide objective accounts of reality. On the contrary, using a realist style, writers and journalists gave highly personal impressions of reality and tried to reveal 'reality as it really was'. They rejected the notion that social conditions were invariable and used narratives as subversive tools to make alternatives conceivable. The novels by Dutch writers such as Lodewijk van Deyssel and Conrad Busken Huet disturbed the bourgeois elite because they challenged commonly ac-

³⁰ Chalaby, 'Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention', pp. 313, 316.

cepted values and revealed social injustice. They wrote on themes considered indecent, such as poverty, the oppression of women and colonial violence. Journalists also focused on the dark side of society. For example, they visited the slums undercover so as to describe the terrible living conditions first hand, encouraging social change rather than merely writing evocative stories. In both journalism and literature a realist style and literary techniques were used to persuade readers to believe and make real their personal and subversive political 'truth'.

Form: Conventions

Journalists need forms to present the information they gather. A newspaper's style is articulated by the forms it uses to present the social world to its readers. 'The form includes the way the medium imagines itself to be and to act', as Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone put it. In other words, form refers to conventions in texts, illustrations and typographical elements. Barnhurst and Nerone state that 'form includes the things that are traditionally labelled layout and design and typography; but it also includes habits of illustration, genres of reportage, and schemes of departmentalization'. They conclude: '*form* is everything a newspaper does to present the look of the news'. It provides a newspaper with a 'visible structure'.³¹

The history of journalistic forms is 'an aesthetic history' that tries to reveal why the face of news is painted as it is.³² Newspapers have to be seen as cultural forms embodying social codes on acceptable modes of representing social reality. The introduction and development of news forms is constrained by technological and economic conditions, and sociocultural factors. Innovations in printing and typesetting made visual elements such as photographs and headlines spanning more than one column possible. The increased speed of news delivery through the telegraph and accelerated printing required other techniques for framing the news. Competition forced newspapers to appeal to the reader's desires and stimulated them to consider the principles of journalism as a profession. However, the use of journalistic forms also reflects the boundaries of the public sphere. It reveals what is tolerable to print for the public.

In her contribution on the Serbian daily *Politika* Verica Rupar examines the relationship between political change, journalistic routines and front page layout. Between 1904 and 2004 the paper survived four political systems, eight wars and three systems of censorship. *Politika* repeatedly had to develop new sets of routines and conventions to survive political changes

³¹ Barnhurst and Nerone, *The Form of News*, p. 3.

³² Barnhurst and Nerone, 'News forms and the media environment', p. 114.

and to maintain its autonomy. Journalism can exist without democracy, Rupp argues. Journalists try to distinguish between 'official' news and 'hidden' news. Their public has to read between the lines. As far as possible newspapers hold to principles such as objectivity, balance, accuracy and fairness, however, the forms they use to express these norms and the intensity of these expressions change. When the political situation was unstable *Politika* devoted more space to politics on its front page. Stories were fragmented into a large number of items with a loose hierarchy. News facts were not interpreted but merely recounted, with several versions of an event being presented. The paper employed the same strategy by using longer headlines, simply describing the event without interpretation.

Form can be analysed at three levels that cover the conventions of structure, design and genre. The structure and length of news items reveals ideological choices. The space an item takes represents the importance editors attach to it. The way a story is structured – linearly or non-linearly, chronologically or by the conventions of the inverted pyramid, polemically or factually – and the use of rhetorical devices, stresses the interpretation of social reality which is voiced in a newspaper. Newspaper design is the most captivating expression of form. Design determines the face of a newspaper. Its arrangement of articles, its departmentalization, its typography and its use of graphic elements – such as photos, drawings, charts and the number and sizes of articles and headlines – express how a newspaper wishes to be seen. They are important materials in the construction of a paper's identity.

My own contribution to this volume examines the development of Dutch newspaper design in the twentieth century. Dutch newspapers had political and cultural objectives. They aimed to educate their readers and express their views. Before the Second World War journalists were generally opposed to the Anglo-American news style, fearing that newspapers would become sensationalist and market oriented if they took news value as the most important selection criterion. The use of visual tools such as headlines, typographical cues and photographs to make their newspapers more comprehensible was despised as 'cultural degeneration'. However, in the course of the century elements of Anglo-American design were slowly adopted. Newspapers acknowledged that they had to develop visual strategies to remain accessible and attractive to readers. At first, the rise in the number of pages forced them to use visual cues to provide a logical infrastructure to guide readers through the information overload. After 1945, a cultural re-orientation towards the Allies and the shortage of newsprint further encouraged the introduction of Anglo-American routines and conventions. Newspapers were now organized according to news value, clarity became increasingly important, and competition from television and more recently the internet stimulated the readers' need for more photography. Para-

doxically, to stay attractive, the newspaper as a textual medium had to increasingly include visual elements.

Genres are textual forms or patterns which organize a story. They transcend individual articles and can be used to categorize them. Journalists write their stories according to genre conventions and are aware readers are also familiar with them. In other words, genres represent an unspoken agreement between the journalists and their readers about what to expect. They structure the reception of news by the public and they make it possible to understand what is written. Genres help people make sense of texts.³³ Interviews, news stories, features or reports each have their own conventions that influence what is included in or excluded from a story. Picking a genre implies choosing how a subject will be represented in the newspaper.

Genres articulate a journalistic style. Contemplative and polemical essays are commonly used in reflective style, while news style uses interviews and news reports. In her contribution to this volume Bernadette Kester explores the altering presentation of international news in two Dutch newspapers from 1880 to 1980. She compares *NRC Handelsblad*, which is commonly regarded as a quality newspaper, to the popular daily *De Telegraaf*, which introduced the Anglo-American news style to the Netherlands. She concludes that until the 1920s, the habit of separating facts and opinion had not yet distinctly developed except in the news coming from press agencies. While Anglo-American journalists reported what had happened, the main task of a Dutch correspondent was 'to write reflective articles', as the highly esteemed journalist Marcus van Blankenstein puts it. Unsurprisingly, *De Telegraaf* was the first of the two newspapers to adopt the routine of strictly separating facts and opinions. It also considered speed in news more important and put important news on the front page under striking headlines. In the 1930s the presentation of foreign news in both papers converged, although *NRC Handelsblad* remained conservative with its detached tone, and *De Telegraaf* used a more emotionalist or sensational style.

Journalistic Strategies: the Struggle for Authority and Autonomy

The categories of form and style build on professional journalistic strategies. Through them journalists try to gain authority and autonomy. The status and prestige of journalists depends on the persuasive force of their stories. Journalistic texts are not merely descriptions of reality, they should be understood as strategic interpretations of reality offering the interpreter the possibility of asserting moral authority. This effect is multiplied because once they have been published, news stories inevitably become part of lar-

³³ Lacey, *Narrative and Genre*, pp. 134–136.

ger discourses or myths which transcend their individual content. A crime story, for example, does not just tell us something about specific events but also, or chiefly, contributes to a meta-story on crime and cultural values.³⁴

Through professional ideology, reflected in conventions and routines, journalism tries to establish an autonomous position in society. Journalists 'have held themselves together not only as a profession – a group kept together by credentialing, licensing, and educational procedures – but as an interpretative community – a group kept together by its narratives, tales, and collective rhetoric'.³⁵ In the late nineteenth century, journalism developed a discourse of its own. Instead of merely transmitting public speeches and texts – by printing verbatim records of parliamentary proceedings or chronological mimetic accounts of speeches, for example – journalists started to frame this information in a professional discourse. As we have seen, they developed specific conventionalized forms which articulated the new routines they used. By doing so, reporters no longer simply relied on public knowledge but asserted a knowledge of their own. These new forms made it possible to interpret the social and political meaning of statements, texts and actions. The editor evolved from a collector who merely presented what had been found, into an interpreter who reordered and rewrote fragments of information into larger narratives.³⁶

To retain and strengthen their social position journalists employ stylistic and formal innovations. Public figures have to adapt to these innovations to fit into the formats of journalism. This guarantees journalism a certain degree of autonomy. The rise of party politics in the Netherlands and other European countries, for example, led to the introduction of the analytical report. In the late 1850s a Dutch parliamentary journalist wrote: 'At a moment when ... differences of political opinions and development declare themselves, and political views are grounded, newspapers ... keep on using a manner of reporting that cannot represent the vividness and the essence of speeches'.³⁷ Providing the readers with verbatim reproductions of the speeches of individual MPs did not fit the new political situation. The new political constellation required an approach that analysed the speeches of MPs against the background of party politics. The summary writer had to judge the speeches on political principles and an MP's prior statements, showing the readers the reasons behind debates and enlightening them on the consequences of the outcomes. The introduction and use of new genres

³⁴ Bird and Dardenne, 'Myth, Chronicle, and Story', p. 71.

³⁵ Zelizer, 'American journalists and the death of Lee Harvey Oswald', p. 192.

³⁶ Matheson, 'The birth of news discourse'; Schudson, 'The politics of narrative form'; Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism*.

³⁷ Quoted in Broersma, 'The Form and Style'.

is mainly a cultural and ideological process in which journalists try to grasp reality and influence the course of events as well.

The new form of the interview was also helpful in distinguishing journalism as a separate field, independent of politics.³⁸ Interviewing turned out to be an effective tool for acquiring a more autonomous position with respect to politicians and other public figures. It helped the move away from the reproduction of official statements in an official language, towards vivid and personal representations of reality. One-way communication – reporting a speech without the possibility of interference – was replaced by a dialogue which provided the opportunity for journalists to intervene, change the subject or even take the lead in the conversation.

The interview encouraged journalists' self-confidence and autonomy. They were doubly in control. During the interview they determined which subjects were to be discussed by asking the questions. Afterwards, they selected the statements to be cited in the story. They had the power to represent the interviewee in any way and both parties concerned knew this throughout. Critics accused interviewers of making news instead of gathering it. Quotations could indeed be 'real', that is, the interviewer could elicit striking remarks from the interviewee. However, should such indiscretions be published? This was regarded as 'dishonourable journalism'.³⁹ Resistance to the interview as a genre was related to the changing power relations between journalism and the elite. Yet this line of critique slowly disappeared. Interviewing was a useful practice for an emerging profession which aspired to an autonomous position in society. It gave journalists more control over public discourse.⁴⁰

The interview also offered journalists a tool for gaining professional status. It was a means of self-representation. In the standard news items or reports journalists were 'invisible'. Articles were unsigned and the form of these genres presupposed the concealment of the process of news gathering and selection. The interviewers, on the other hand, were 'visible' actors. Their names were mentioned at times and they were always present in the text. That gave them the opportunity to display their merits by writing down intelligent questions and witty remarks. They could show their critical sense and their persistence in getting someone talking.⁴¹

Kevin Barnhurst offers another example of journalists using discursive strategies to gain authority. In his contribution he shows how in US newspapers, journalists increasingly acted as experts in interpreting news events.

³⁸ Broersma, 'The discursive strategy of a subversive genre'.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism*, p. 128.

⁴¹ Broersma, 'The discursive strategy of a subversive genre'.

This trend was stimulated by the increase in numbers of journalists with a higher education. Most were white men from the power elite. Their close ideological affiliation with this group determined who was represented in the news. Journalists rely on authorities with expert knowledge who can elucidate the behaviour of social groups – people like themselves. Over the course of the twentieth century, individuals have been replaced by groups in news items. Today, almost everyone on a newspaper page is characterized by group affiliation rather than his or her name. People are quoted as representatives, or official spokespeople, of groups. The number of official sources and experts per article continue to grow. Barnhurst suggests that journalists want to stress ‘the complex interplay of social forces’ instead of individual actions.

The recent introduction of ‘new’ digital media which offer interactivity between the editors and their public raises questions about the paradigms of journalism. Norms such as objectivity, neutrality and balance seem to lose importance and the boundaries of the journalistic field are blurred. Today every citizen can be a reporter and a media entrepreneur, as Jean Chalaby argues in his contribution on the influence of the digital revolution on journalistic practices. Young people today primarily access news on the internet. This threatens the future of the newspaper industry because there is not yet a successful business model for journalism on the net. New genres and practices are being generated, however. Web logs offering personal accounts of news by professional journalists and amateur reporters are added to newspaper sites. Digital technologies, Chalaby states, ‘blur the boundaries between producers and consumers’. These commentary blogs are highly personal, they show how news affects the writer’s life. The traditional, detached Anglo-American news style seems to be losing ground again to an opinionated and personalized style. It resembles many characteristics of the journalism dominant in Europe before the Second World War, though it also differs in that shared ideologies have given way to individual opinions.

Form and Style as a Field of Research

The study of forms and styles in journalism history aims to examine journalism systematically – it intends to analyse texts in their context. Newspapers present a social map of reality to their readers day after day. They frame the social world in a professional discourse which has to convince readers that events occurred exactly as the newspaper describes. Journalists construct meaning and by successfully doing so they gain authority. As a performative discourse, journalism has to appeal to broader cultural values that differ in time and place. Categories of form and style embody those

values and also reflect commonly shared journalistic codes and norms. Simultaneously, they articulate a newspaper's individual identity, its ideological stand and style at a given moment. While the content of a newspaper changes every day, its form and style remain consistent – they facilitate the ritual functioning of newspapers. The study of form and style links the level of individual media and journalistic texts to the general levels of journalism and society. By doing so it deepens our understanding of the functioning of journalism. This is why the study of form and style in journalism matters.