BEYOND NEWS

THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

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INTRODUCTION

Quality Journalism Reconsidered

Most Americans today think of journalists the way most journalists think of themselves: as reporters of news. Indeed, many practitioners and patrons of traditional journalism in the United States would accept the standard for the profession that Bill Keller enunciated in 2009: "By quality journalism I mean the kind that involves experienced reporters going places, bearing witness, digging into records, developing sources, checking and double-checking."[1] Keller was then the top editor of the *New York Times*.

This book argues that this view of journalism, which arrived in the nineteenth century, is outdated in the twenty-first. It proposes an alternative understanding of quality in journalism. And, in so doing, it also suggests an alternative response to journalism's crisis.

Yes, the crisis. In recent decades, things have not been going well for journalists. Although the population has continued to grow, total newspaper circulation in the United States has dropped more than 25 percent since 1990, according to the Pew Research Center. The evening newscasts of the three traditional broadcast television networks in the United States—once the dominant news sources in the country—have lost more than half their audience since 1980. Meanwhile, two of the country's major news magazines no longer publish regularly, and the third, *Time*, watched its newsstand sales plummet 27 percent in 2012 alone.[2]

Large numbers of talented, hardworking people have as a result lost their jobs. Newspapers in the United States employed about 30 percent

fewer journalists in 2012 than they did at the beginning of the twenty-first century, according to that Pew report.[3] Online and cable news operations have grabbed audiences but not replaced enough jobs—at least not enough that pay. A particularly chilling consequence of these cutbacks has been a drop in the number of professional reporters patrolling city halls, statehouses, and the sites of our recent or lingering wars.[4]

In their gloom, journalists and those who value them have been repairing to conferences to rend their clothes, wail their wails, and curse the Fates. Some, overcoming a much-prized dispassion, pen apocalyptic screeds and mouth dreadful prophecies.

These defenders of the craft—in their anxiety, in their distress—are wont to declare news itself to be in crisis.[5] In this, however, they are wrong. News for the most part is in fine shape.

News can be defined as new information about a subject of some public interest that is shared with some portion of the public.[6] It is hard not to notice that the amount of new information of public interest being shared continues to swell even as jobs handling it vanish. Indeed, the recent arrival of the most powerful information technology in human history has, as one might have expected, been a boon for news. The World Wide Web remains very young, but already it gathers accounts of an extraordinarily wide variety of events from an extraordinarily wide variety of sources and disseminates them in a wide variety of formats fast and far. Amazingly fast: newsworthy events nowadays—statements, contretemps, disasters—are all over the Web before they are over.[7] And impressively far: our computer-Internet-cell-Web devices, despite the efforts of some governments to restrict them, now zip words and images in and out of almost every country on earth. We have not before seen a news medium like this.

This does not mean the news that comes to us on our laptops, smart phones, tablets, or, soon, wearable devices is always edifying, constructive, or reliable. News in print or on television, after all, has often enough failed to embody those virtues. And the Web's manifold strengths as a news medium do not mean all news will be equally well served by it. As amateurs and algorithms collect and distribute more news, issues of accuracy, accountability, bias, depth, and professionalism loom larger. We have to be alert, as we must be with any medium, for blind spots. Once, it should be remembered, journalism reviews devoted themselves to cataloging the many egregious oversights of newspapers and newscasts—with their sometimes narrow-minded and conventional "gatekeepers."

The Web's weak points, at first glance, appear to fall into two categories. One is a failure to report regularly on news that grew up with and, perhaps, grew old with newspaper beat systems: varieties of local news in particular. The second is a reluctance to deploy teams of experienced reporters, of which the Web so far has few, and to devote space, of which it has plenty, to original investigations.

However, the multitudes that have by now obtained Internet connections have access to a bountiful supply of news. The gates have flung open. And the flow of news on the Web and its cousins seems, if anything, likely to continue to broaden, deepen, and accelerate. Entrepreneurs and nonprofits have even begun having a go at some of those blind spots. The future of news, in other words, appears reasonably secure.

It is the future of journalism that is looking grim.

Defining exactly what journalism is has proven surprisingly difficult.[8] It is, in some sense, a specialized enterprise—usually performed for pay—but define it too narrowly, and you risk depriving nonspecialists, amateurs, of its privileges and responsibilities.[9] It is clearly about news, but again too narrow a focus on reporting and distributing the news—Bill Keller's focus in 2009—can limit this enterprise's possibilities. Here is my definition: journalism is the activity of collecting, presenting, interpreting, or commenting upon the news for some portion of the public.

For approximately the past century and a half, journalists have emphasized the collecting and presenting of news. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, they have made their living—indeed, constructed grand enterprises—either through the sale of news or through the sale of ads next to news. (Chapter 2 of this book considers how this combination

was accomplished, chapter 3 why this era is ending.) It does not look as if similar numbers of journalists will be able to make their living this way in the future.

In an effort to coax some money out of their growing numbers of online-only customers, many news organizations have begun constructing often partially permeable "pay walls."[10] Nevertheless, the flood of information on current events now sloshing around the Internet can be sipped, drunk, or bathed in on thousands of news sites, blogs, feeds, apps—mostly for free. This has understandably strained profit margins and flummoxed business models—including pay walls—at many of those news sites, blogs, feeds, and apps. There is not much of a living in hawking that which is given away free. That is like running a ferry after they've built the bridge. It is like selling ice after everyone has a refrigerator. Ask encyclopedia salesmen today, if you can find one.

Radio and television newscasts had overcome this problem with advertising. However, unlike the supply of programs on radio or TV back in their heyday as advertising media, the supply of news-rich pages on the Internet is now so large that it is hard to charge much for ads on those pages.[11] Even the supply of online audio and video news, which can be preceded by short commercials, seems to be heading in the direction of unlimited as audio and video become ever easier to record, edit, upload, and access. The success of digital news itself consequently undercuts the economics of digital journalism: because it is so plentiful, it is worth less to audiences and advertisers. Now that information pours out of spigots, the point is, painstakingly gathered facts on current events—what happened, who said what, when—have lost much of their value. (The problem traditional news organizations now face in trying to sell accounts of public events, even if they may have reported them somewhat more skillfully, is discussed in chapter 3.)

Probably the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Bloomberg, and a few additional news organizations will be able to make a go of supplying written or video accounts of such events to websites fast and in bulk. However, it is difficult to see many others basing a business on the fruits of such run-of-the-mill reporting—on merely collecting and presenting

routine news. After more than a century and a half of selling the latest facts, journalists need to sell something else.

With a desperation characteristic of people whose livelihoods are at stake, journalists have been forced in recent years to rethink how "quality journalism" might be distributed: newspapers and magazines contemplate abandoning print; radio news programs produce podcasts; television news networks have begun to think of themselves as video-report suppliers. And it is difficult to find a news operation today that does not arm its reporters with a variety of recording devices and that is not splashing news up on Facebook, Twitter, and some spiffy new app for Apple's latest insanely desirable iDoohickey. Journalists today are even rethinking how "quality journalism" might be funded: perhaps through nonprofits, if not pay walls.

Few today, however, are rethinking what, in these changing times, "quality journalism" might be. Yet definitions of quality, like technologies, are vulnerable to obsolescence. Consider—to jump fields and centuries—the case of Ernest Meissonier.

Meissonier, who died in 1891, was for a time the most respected painter in Paris and therefore the world.[12] "He is the incontestable master of our epoch," gushed another master painter, Eugène Delacroix, who proclaimed to Charles Baudelaire that, "amongst all of us, surely it is he who is most certain to survive."[13]

Meissonier excelled at precision and accuracy: "I paint like everyone else," he once explained. "Only I look always."[14] Meissonier's work was based, in other words, on intensive observation—of the exact positions adopted, for example, by a moving horse: "What efforts, what sketches, what lengths of precious time, what fatigue he incurred," one contemporary exclaims, "to faithfully translate the living animal!"[15] Critics raved about Meissonier's "scrupulous exactitude."[16] His painstakingly precise re-creations of great events dominated the most important expositions and commanded the highest prices.

Meissonier's masterwork, which took him twelve years to complete, was a depiction of Napoleon and his army at Friedland in 1807. It was sold to an American for 380,000 francs in 1876.[17] *Friedland* is currently on display in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and features quite a few well-realized horses.

Ernest Meissonier saw himself as part of a "tradition of . . . honesty, conscientiousness and truthfulness."[18] By the end of the nineteenth century, however, such efforts to get every detail just right were starting to seem a waste of time, and the tradition Meissonier exemplified was starting to seem something of a bore. A new technology was helping to change understandings of what painting might be.

Photography demonstrated, to begin with, that the "truthfulness" offered by Meissonier's paintings was limited—even when it came to horses' gaits. The American photographer Eadweard Muybridge, employing speeded-up cameras and a system of trip wires, had managed to photograph horses in motion. Muybridge, who was quite aware of Meissonier's work, confirmed the painter's depiction of the walk, but Muybridge's photos showed different leg positions during the trot and, in particular, the gallop than Meissonier had been able to paint by merely looking—however intently.[19] Horses legs simply moved too fast for naked eyes—even Meissonier's eyes—to follow. "If I could only repaint *Friedland*," Meissonier, who was quite aware of Muybridge's work, was reported to have said.[20] His later paintings restrict themselves to horses that are walking or standing still.[21]

And this new technology not only beat realistic painters at their own game but did so, as shutter speeds continued to accelerate, without all the "efforts," "sketches," and "fatigue." The camera, with its revelations, initially contributed to a fever for facts from which realistic painters such as Meissonier benefited. But soon enough photography devalued precisely that at which Meissonier specialized: it made producing painstakingly accurate re-creations of just about anything easy and therefore cheap.

Attitudes were in time adjusted accordingly. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the notion that quality in art was dependent upon precision and verisimilitude faded. After Meissonier's death, his reputation tumbled to the point where one major two-volume history of French art in the nineteenth century did not even mention his name. The Louvre eventually exiled a marble statue of Meissonier from its halls.[22]

Have technologies today, in particular technologies introduced in the past couple of decades, done the same with the painstaking gathering of information on current events? Through blogs, emails, and tweets, audiences can receive firsthand reports on newsworthy happenings as those events trot or gallop along. Through video and live cameras, they can often even "observe" those events themselves. Have technologies today, therefore, beaten traditional news reporting at its own game? By making it so easy for audiences to find out what happened, have they reduced the value of telling them what happened? Have they, in other words, outdated the view of quality in journalism that many traditional journalists still hold: the veneration of witnessing, digging, finding sources, and checking?

Bill Keller, striking something of an apocalyptic tone himself, lamented the "diminishing supply" of his version of "quality journalism."[23] But "diminishing supply" can sometimes be a sign of diminishing need. The Web grants us all the ability to dig, find sources, and check—to *search*, in a word. It often grants us the ability to witness. Is it possible the supply of the kind of journalism in which this is done for us, like the supply of realistic painting after photography, *should* diminish? Maybe we don't require as many of Keller's "experienced reporters" as we did before much of the world presented itself to us online.

Without making light of the professional crisis journalism has experienced, we might discern an opportunity here for journalism. The Web allows our best journalists to surrender the prosaic task of telling everyone what just happened. It allows them to leave the speeches and press conferences in part to the cable networks and YouTube; to leave the interviews with police and survivors to diligent wire-service reporters; to fob off surveillance of some lesser boards and councils on civic-minded individuals with an urge to tweet and post. It would be a blow to what sometimes seems a colonial conception of reporting, but our best

journalists might even surrender some of the responsibility for filling in Americans on what has been going on in India, Egypt, or Iraq to cosmopolitan residents of India, Egypt, or Iraq. It might no longer be quite so necessary to parachute in a jaded American with a notepad. The Web allows our best journalists—it requires them, I will argue—to return to an older and higher view of their calling: not as reporters of what's going on, but as individuals capable of providing a wise take on what's going on.

Certainly—at difficult times, in hard-to-reach places—"bearing witness" can reveal and expose. Certainly, facts must be checked, worried over. Certainly, much still can be uncovered by "digging into records" and "developing sources." Nothing said here is meant to imply that journalists should forgo human rights reporting, investigative reporting, enterprise reporting, or exclusives.

However, merely noting who said what at some public event—mere "stenographic" reporting, to use the most dismissive of the terms that has been applied to it—today shares some of the flaws of a Meissonier painting: it is occasionally less starkly truthful than simply watching or listening to recordings of that event, and it is less revealing than freer, more far-reaching discussions of that event online by well-informed individuals with an insight or point of view to share.

Ernest Meissonier's work was connected, of course, to a movement that extended well beyond painting: a movement that Honoré de Balzac proclaimed in the preface to one of his books in the 1830s: "The author firmly believes that details alone will henceforth determine the merit of works."[24] Details dominated much nineteenth-century fiction—realistic, naturalistic, even coarse, and often morally or politically troubling details. Though his work was not coarse or troubling, Meissonier, like Balzac, was a details man. So, for another example, was the English physician John Snow, who in the middle of that century located cholera deaths and wells on a map to demonstrate that the disease spread through contaminated drinking water.[25] The pursuit of details, of facts, was crucial to the advance

of nineteenth-century science and medicine. And as that century progressed, increasing numbers of journalists became details men and women, too. (Chapter 2 considers how and why American journalists convinced themselves that their highest purpose was collecting facts.)

Despite the great accomplishments of what Balzac had called the impulse to "venerate the fact,"[26] literature, painting, and in some sense science would move on in the next century. They would cease to imagine the world as composed of discreet, independently verifiable details that could be captured by sufficient observation, "conscientiousness[,] and truthfulness." Novelists, painters, and in some sense scientists left realism behind in the twentieth century.

Most journalists in the United States did not. To the contrary: their embrace of realism—of facts, of details, conscientiously and truthfully rendered—became ever more passionate in the twentieth century.[27]

As early as 1859, the poet Charles Baudelaire was mocking the view that "art is, and cannot be other than, the exact reproduction of Nature."[28] The Impressionists later in that century were much inclined toward nature, but they didn't necessarily look for it where the Meissoniers of the world had found it. "Nature is not on the surface," Paul Cezanne proclaimed. "It is in the depth."[29] In the first decades of the twentieth century, paintings would appear that showed aspects of nature, human faces in particular, from multiple perspectives at once or that showed nothing easily recognizable as nature. In 1919, Virginia Woolf, writing about fiction, was attacking the "materialists" and noting how "life escapes" their "magnificent apparatus for catching" it.[30] Painting and literature turned from diligent attempts to capture material details to offering impressions and perspectives; they turned from the objective to the subjective. Physics turned, in important ways, from a universe filled with the fixed and knowable to a view of even the physical world, at great enough speeds or small enough sizes, as relative and uncertain.

Journalism missed that turn. In the United States, only a limited number of journalism critics[31] and a small minority of journalists in the twentieth century questioned the merit and scope of the "scrupulous exactitude" reporters were getting better and better at pursuing.[32] In 1922,

even Walter Lippmann, among the wisest of journalists and journalism critics, thought "reality" could be easily located, although, not surprisingly, he had some difficulty settling on exactly where it might be found—"outside" us, not in the subjective "pictures in our heads" or, as he writes some pages later, in "the interior scene" rather than the "façade" we present to the world.[33]

By the start of the twenty-first century, journalists had grown a little more humble. "Journalism does not pursue truth in an absolute or philosophical sense," acknowledged one distinguished group, the Committee of Concerned Journalists, itself administered by the Project for Excellence in Journalism. But in its "Principles of Journalism" this group did insist that journalism "can—and must—pursue" truth "in a practical sense." It asserted, in a somewhat clumsy wording, that "this 'journalistic truth' is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts." And the Committee of Concerned Journalists was not at all humble in its view of the importance of such verified and assembled facts: "Democracy depends on citizens having reliable, accurate facts put in a meaningful context."[34]

Some of the words used here—*practical*, *process*, *context*—bespeak an awareness that piling detail upon detail does not a world make. That is encouraging. But in their pursuit of "excellence," such committees of journalists still have some difficulty surrendering the nineteenth- and twentieth-century notion that journalists are primarily collectors of facts.

The continued clinging to this notion is odd because newspapers, newsreels, and newscasts, though allergic to modernism and postmodernism, rank high among the forces that spurred modernism and postmodernism in the twentieth century. They helped outmode simpler conceptions of reality through their relentless interrogations, their compulsive cynicism, their mixings of high and low, their unavoidable heterogeneity, and their incessant reminders of the importance of the way something is communicated.

"Is the press a messenger?" asked the Viennese critic Karl Kraus in 1914. "No it is the event itself." Kraus's characteristic bitterness after the start of the First World War exceeded even his characteristic irony. The press, he complained, is "the most murderous weapon" progress wields, for it destroys the assumption that an occurrence might have an existence independent of the way we talk about it—the assumption, even, that the occurrence proceeds the way we talk about it: "Deeds are stronger than words," Kraus wrote, "but the echo is stronger than the deed. We live on the echo, and in this topsy-turvy world the echo arouses the call."[35]

The press spent much of the twentieth century demonstrating the power of "the echo," yet many journalists refused to take the lesson. Stiff-necked and unblinking in their own focus on events, lost in their own chase after deeds, spellbound by the perpetrators of such deeds, they failed to note the debt those events and deeds owed to culture, to language, to dissemination. They continued to believe that the facts they were "assembling and verifying" had an existence entirely independent of the process of assembling, verifying, investigating, sorting, and presenting in "a meaningful context."

Walter Cronkite always closed the *CBS Evening News*, probably the leading news source in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s, by announcing, "And that's the way it is." He did not say—and I have seen no evidence that he thought—"and that's one perspective on the way it is." And Cronkite certainly did not say—and I would be surprised if he or most of his contemporaries in journalism thought—"and that's the way our coverage helps make it seem to be."[36]

In the nineteenth century, the best journalists had seen themselves as and were often welcomed as participants in literature and philosophy.[37] In the twentieth century, many of them seemed at war with literature and philosophy. Indeed, journalists would sometimes be dismissed as philistines, for they had become champions of precisely the era and ideology that contemporary artists and thinkers were aggressively positioning themselves against: journalism in the United States in particular, outside of the arts pages at least, became the last redoubt of realism—

of the insistence that there was, if you could get the facts right, a "way it is." "Objectivity" was American journalism's religion. Its practitioners transformed themselves into such fierce defenders of realism that they sometimes came through with parodies of avant-garde art or experimental prose and dismissals of literary theory as "mumbo-jumbo."[38] Indeed, Tom Wolfe—before he switched to novels among the most adventurous and creative of journalists—became one of the leading critics of the turn away from realism in literature and art.[39]

Many of the ways and means of realism remained beneficial, of course, for journalism: going places is good, digging and checking are good, as are thoroughness, industry, and fairness. Let us not underestimate the accomplishments of the realism that lived on in journalism in a century desecrated by some terrible and mighty events and deeds. The list of exposés managed by reporters in the United States in the twentieth century—with their doggedness in pursuit of old-fashioned, nineteenth-century-style facts—is long and impressive: it includes Lincoln Steffens on municipal corruption, John Hersey on the horrific consequences of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Rachel Carson on the dangers of pesticides, Seymour Hersh on an American atrocity in Vietnam, and Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein on foul doings in the Nixon White House. Tom Wolfe also had a point in arguing that, with many novelists having departed for more subjective realms, journalists had something of an exclusive on some contentious and colorful goings-on in the last half of the twentieth century.[40] The "magnificent apparatus" for capturing facts constructed by traditional journalism in the United States has often performed impressively.

And this "apparatus" has often enough seemed sufficient. It was hard to argue that journalists needed a Pablo Picasso or a Virginia Woolf, let alone a Werner Heisenberg, to tell us about the latest presidential campaign. But wouldn't that coverage have benefited, as it attempted to disentangle that which had been spun, from a little more facility with perspective, a somewhat more extensive acquaintance with the wanderings of the human mind, and a surer grasp of the limits of certainty? As the founder and editor of the *Talking Points Memo* journalism website, Josh Marshall, noted during the 2012 U.S. presidential primaries,

"Campaigns have a way of not working by logical principles or, perhaps we should say, Newtonian physics."[41] And didn't Woolf do rather well with the First World War? Didn't Picasso do rather well with Guernica? For details alone—even if "reliable," "accurate," and placed in "a meaningful context"—have serious limitation even as guides to the world of current events. The case can be made that politics sometimes "escapes" this journalism, as does much of the rest of "life."

In his journal, even Delacroix, though one of Ernest Meissonier's biggest admirers, confided his suspicion that "there is something else in painting besides exactitude and precise rendering."[42] There is something else in journalism, too.

Jill Abramson succeeded Bill Keller as the top editor of the *New York Times* in 2011. In 2010, she had offered her own explanation of what "quality journalism" provides: "trustworthy information about the world we live in—information that is tested, investigated, sorted, checked again, analyzed and presented in a cogent form."[43] This explanation is, with one exception, compatible with Keller's understanding of "quality journalism." But that exception is significant. Abramson includes a word not used by her predecessor: *analyzed*. That is a word with which a more up-to-date conception of journalism might begin.[44]

The definition of journalism introduced in this book is careful to acknowledge that journalism might be more than "exactitude and precise rendering." That definition includes interpreting or commenting upon the news—as bloggers today and printers at the time of the American Revolution would expect it to include; as our editorial writers, columnists, and contributors to opinion journals and others serious magazines would expect it to include. For even at the height of American journalism's fidelity to realism, even in the middle of the twentieth century, some examples of first-rate interpretation and comment could be found—on certain pages, in certain publications. (Chapters 4 and 6 include examples.)

The Committee of Concerned Journalists, Bill Keller, and most traditional journalists are no doubt aware that there are other journalisms besides "the discipline of assembling and verifying facts." I do not believe they meant to exclude interpretation and comment entirely from the realm of quality journalism. Keller's *New York Times* did after all devote two pages each day specifically to opinion. (Before and after Keller was the paper's executive editor, his own essays appeared on one of those pages.) And the prominence of "news analysis" pieces on other pages in the paper increased on Keller's watch. After Abramson replaced Keller, she seems to have begun going further: deemphasizing somewhat the *Times*'s efforts to present its readers with all the important details on yesterday's most important events.*

In fact, interpretation and comment are popping up all over journalism today. (Chapter 4 chronicles their recent resurgence.) Yes, commentary can often be shrill and predictable—on talk radio, on cable television, on many websites. (Chapter 6 includes a critique, based on standards introduced in chapter 1, of the variety of opinionated journalism that often appears on outlets such as Fox News Channel and MSNBC.) But some of this interpretation and comment is original and enlightening—particularly in our better magazines, particularly on our smarter blogs and websites, sometimes in the *New York Times*. The loud and the shrill get the attention of journalism critics, but original and enlightening forms of analytic journalism are pointing the way to the future.

This book is not calling for the invention of something new. It is calling for us to aspire, with more awareness and understanding, to a journalism that *regularly* does much more than simply recount who said or did what yesterday. It is calling for a broader, more ambitious journalism. And it is arguing that such a journalism will not fully arrive without a change in mindset.[45]

* Because the *New York Times* is the best and most influential of our traditional news organs, any criticism of current thinking on journalism must take it on. Its efforts, in print and online, are often discussed in these pages. The *Times* has been changing with the times. My argument is that, despite its many strengths, it needs to change more.

Journalism has undergone enormous changes at other times. (Chapter 2 focuses on journalism's transformation in the nineteenth century.) The inventions that spur such periods of change have been hard to miss, as have the methodological improvements, particularly greater speed, those exciting new machines bring. The upheavals such technological advances impose upon the business of journalism have also been seen and grasped without much delay: old enterprises begin to stumble and fall; new enterprises, led by unorthodox innovators, soon call attention to themselves. However, the realization that *understandings* of journalism must also change spreads more slowly—particularly among those who achieved success with the old understandings, particularly among the orthodox. New mindsets are needed to best employ the new technologies and save some of the old businesses. But mindsets inevitably lag behind.

Consider for another example of a mainstream twenty-first-century journalist's mind that of Martin Baron, who took over as the top editor of the *Washington Post* in January 2013. Months earlier Baron had delivered an inspiring speech to newspaper editors in which he had advocated openness to "innovation" and all sorts of change—innovation and change *except* in the newspaper's "traditional purpose and . . . core values."[46]

And what is that "traditional purpose"? Baron's answer, a good summary of a kind of journalistic orthodoxy, began: "Stories that are well reported. Stories that are well told. Stories that offer a window on the communities we serve." He mentioned "insights," but only the sort that arrive, according to the familiar journalistic trope, "from looking beneath the surface"—from digging, from reporting, in other words. "Interpretation" or "analysis" did not appear among the 127 words Baron used to describe what he believes ought to be preserved in journalism.

Baron emphasized in this speech the importance of "doing all of this work—all of this journalism—honestly, honorably, accurately, and fairly." He did not mention, among these "core values," the importance of doing journalism knowledgeably, intelligently, or insightfully. Indeed,

Baron's more than 3,000-word speech did not consider at any point the notion that journalists today might have to offer understandings, not just facts.

Marty Baron, like the other journalists I have been quoting, is smart, accomplished, and public spirited. Neither he nor they are unaware of the value of analytic journalism. In 2005, while Baron was editor of the *Boston Globe*, a series in that newspaper exploring the science and ethics of stem-cell research won the Pulitzer Prize for "explanatory journalism." But when Baron, upon leaving the *Globe,* was asked what he was proud of at that newspaper, he mentioned, in a *Globe* reporter's paraphrase, "its investigative reporting, arts coverage, narrative journalism, and war reporting in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as its push into digital and multimedia formats."[47] Baron apparently neglected, once again, to mention interpretation or analysis. Mainstream journalists often neglect to mention them.

Indeed, the number of journalists today who continue to overlook the importance of interpretation is evidence that the rethinking of journalism—the transformation of the traditional journalist's mindset—has just begun. It is therefore not surprising that the remaking of journalism has a long way to go, too.

This book argues that quality in twenty-first-century journalism lies not so much in "experienced reporters going places, . . . developing sources, checking and double-checking," as Keller put it—though all those activities are certainly useful. It argues that quality in journalism lies instead in what I am calling "wisdom journalism"—journalism that strengthens our understanding of the world.

Wisdom journalism is an amalgam. It includes, to begin with, the more rarified forms of reporting—exclusive, enterprising, investigative. Though such original forms of reporting remain in short supply, there is no controversy about their worth. Much of what Marty Baron is proud of at the *Boston Globe* would qualify. But wisdom journalism also includes and even emphasizes informed, interpretive, explanatory, even opinionated takes on current events.[48]

Much more of this kind of writing, audio, video, or Web work is needed. It must continue to expand well beyond a few serious magazines, a bunch of thoughtful blogs, and those two pages, a Sunday section, or some "news analysis" pieces in newspapers such as the *New York Times*. It needs to become mainstream. (Chapter 4 includes a detailed account of where such analysis has and has not shown up in coverage of a few specific stories in recent years.) We need to develop standards to help distinguish such wisdom journalism from the shrill and predictable. (Chapter 1 has this task.) And we need to get better at it.

That will require not only a change in mindset, but further and substantial changes in the way journalism is currently practiced: If providing insight rather than gathering facts is to become journalism's main mission—not an auxiliary mission—traditional methods of hiring and promoting might no longer apply. The assignment structure will have to be transformed. (Chapter 7 outlines these changes.) Evenhandedness and dispassion might no longer be dominant values. (Chapter 5 discusses some of the limitations of journalistic objectivity.) Original perspectives will push widely available information from whatever passes for a front page. And we will need to apply as much thought to standards for journalistic argumentation as we have applied to how to cover an event.

This sounds like a new approach to journalism; actually, it is in some ways an old one—from the days before American journalism's enthrallment with realism. The book's first chapter examines journalism as Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson knew it and uses pieces of writing from their day to introduce some standards for distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful wisdom journalism.