# Putting the storytelling back into stories: Creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Journalism Discipline
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
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October 2006

#### **ABSTRACT**

This work explores the place of creative non-fiction in Australian tertiary journalism education. While creative non-fiction — a genre of writing based on the techniques of the fiction writer — has had a rocky relationship with journalism, this study shows that not only is there a place for the genre in journalism education, but that it is inextricably linked with journalism. The research is based on results from studies using elite interviews and a census of Australian universities with practical journalism curricula.

The first stage of this study provides a definition of creative non-fiction based on the literature and a series of elite interviews held with American and Australian creative non-fiction experts. This definition acknowledges creative non-fiction as a genre of writing that tells true stories while utilising fiction writing techniques such as point of view, dialogue and vivid description. The definition also takes into account creative non-fiction's diverse range of publication styles which include feature articles, memoir, biography, literary journalism and narrative non-fiction.

The second stage of the study reports upon elite interviews with Australian writers who have produced works in the genres of journalism and creative non-fiction. These interviews reveal the close relationship journalism and creative non-fiction share across a variety of approaches and techniques. This study also shows how creative non-fiction can improve the careers of journalists and the quality of journalism.

The census of journalism programs further reveals the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary journalism education and prompts the formulation of a two tiered model for the genre's inclusion in the curriculum. The first tier involves including creative non-fiction in a core journalism subject. The second tier is an elective creative non-fiction subject which builds on the skills developed in the core classes.

Through the literature, and the responses of the elites and survey respondents, it was possible to show how creative non-fiction helps journalism students to appreciate the

history of their profession, explore their talents and finally to be part of what may be the future of print journalism.

### **CONTENTS**

Chapter	Topic	Page
	Abstract	ii
	Statement of original authorship	ix
	Acknowledgements	X
1	Introduction	1
1.1	Overview	1
1.2	The specific area of research	1
1.3	Aims	2
1.4	Objectives	2
1.5	Relevance	3
1.6	Definition of terms	5
1.7	Outline of the remainder of the document	6
2	Literature Review	8
2.1	Introduction	8
2.2	The origins of news structure	8
2.3	The re-emergence of the narrative	10
	news story – New Journalism	
2.4	The rise of narrative journalism	13
2.5	The emergence of creative non-fiction	15
2.6	Towards a definition of journalism – an	21
	exculpatory introduction	
2.7	The truth	25
2.8	Journalism education	30
2.9	Creative non-fiction in journalism	48
	education	
2.10	Investigation of methodological tools	49
3	Methodology	57
3.1	Introduction	57
3.2	Stage 1: Uncovering the definition of	57
	creative non-fiction	
3.3	Stage 2: Uncovering the place of	64
	creative non-fiction	
3.4	Representation of findings	79

4	Stage 1: Defining Creative non-fiction	80
4.1	Introduction	80
4.2	Elite's qualification for inclusion in the	81
	study	
4.3	Interview Results: Questions posed	83
4.4	Writing approaches and techniques	83
4.5	Categories explained	84
4.6	Publishing styles	108
4.7	Attacks on the term 'creative non-fiction'	114
4.8	Definition construction	116
5	Stage 2: Uncovering the place of creative	118
	non-fiction. Phase 1 – Elite interviews	
5.1	Introduction	118
5.2	Methodological Considerations	119
5.3	Elites' qualifications for inclusion in the	120
	study	
5.4	Interview Results: Questions posed	123
5.5	Journalism – Creative non-fiction	123
	relationship	
5.6	The perfect journalism program: Can	155
	journalism benefit from creative non-fiction	?
5.7	Discussion	159
6	Stage 2: Uncovering the place of creative	164
	non-fiction. Phase 2 – Census of	
	journalism programs	
6.1	Introduction	164
6.2	Where are we now – survey results	166
6.3	Introduction	183
6.4	Where we are now – qualitative results	184
	and discussion	
6.5	Key findings	214
7	The place of creative non-fiction in	218
	journalism education	
7.1	Introduction	218
7.2	Relationship between journalism and	219
	creative non-fiction	

	References	273
	Appendices	262
8.3	Directions for further research	260
	of research outcomes	
8.2	Review of research questions and summary	251
8.1	Introduction	251
	tertiary journalism education	
8	Conclusion. Creative non-fiction in	251
	journalism education	
7.5	Finding creative non-fiction's place in	237
7.4	Industry relevance	230
7.3	Purpose of university journalism education	224

# LIST OF FIGURES

Number	Topic	Page
Figure 1.1	Terminology description	6
Figure 4.1	Describing creative non-fiction	84
Figure 4.2	Approaches to writing	84
Figure 4.3	Techniques of creative non-fiction	91
Figure 4.4	The way creative non-fiction treats truth	103
Figure 4.5	What creative non-fiction is not	107
Figure 4.6	Publishing styles of creative non-fiction	108
Figure 5.1	The stages of research	118
Figure 5.2	Approach dynamic	128
Figure 5.3	Audience dynamic	130
Figure 5.4	Editors dynamic	133
Figure 5.5	Truth dynamic	140
Figure 5.6	Structure dynamic	143
Figure 5.7	People dynamic	145
Figure 5.8	Speech dynamic	146
Figure 5.9	Point of view dynamic	150
Figure 5.10	Research dynamic	152
Figure 5.11	Time dynamic	154
Figure 5.12	Elites' views on what a journalism student	159
	should learn in a journalism program	
Figure 7.1	Creative non-fiction in tertiary	250
	journalism education	
Figure 8.1	Possible outcomes of creative non-fiction's	258
	inclusion in journalism education	

# LIST OF TABLES

Number	Topic	Page
Table 1.1	Sales of Australian printed books	4
Table 3.1	Definitions of creative non-fiction	58
Table 3.2	Email questionnaires:	68
	problems and solutions	
Table 3.3	Sample survey question	78
Table 3.4	Sample survey question	78
Table 3.5	Sample survey question	79
Table 5.1	The crossover between journalism and	163
	creative non-fiction	
Table 6.1	Question 4	166
Table 6.2	Question 5	167
Table 6.3	Question 6	168
Table 6.4	Question 8	170
Table 6.5	Question 9 – Extra publishing style?	171
Table 6.6	Question 9 – Is the style creative	171
	non-fiction?	
Table 6.7	Question 10	172
Table 6.8	Questions 11 and 12	174
Table 6.9	Question 14	176
Table 6.10	Question 15	177
Table 6.11	Question 16	177
Table 6.12	Question 17	178
Table 6.13	Question 18	180
Table 6.14	Question 19	181
Table 6.15	Question 20	181
Table 6.16	Question 21	182
Table 6.17	Questions 22 and 23	183
Table 6.18	Key findings and issues	215

#### Statement of original authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:
Date:

#### Acknowledgements

First and foremost I must thank Mark Pearson, without whom I could never have embarked on this journey, let alone reached this destination. His support and guidance have been invaluable in every step of the process.

Thanks must also go to my second supervisor Bill Krebs, whose words have provided many important ideas and enormous encouragement.

This work was also possible through the help and support of Maree Hall, who was there for as long as she could be with practical advice or wonderful distractions when things were a little tense. She is greatly missed.

I am deeply grateful to those who helped me with the survey which forms part of this study. In particular, thanks to Deannah Jang who was invaluable though her assistance with SPSS. Thanks also to Jeff Brand and Mark Bahr for their advice in the formulation and statistical interpretation of the survey.

I must also thank all those who have read this document at different stages and provided precious advice. Those who were involved in the Confirmation of Candidature: Gregory Boyle, Peter Harrison, and Richard Phillipps and those who provided feedback as part of my Oral Defence: Robyn Lincoln and Anne Cullen.

Thanks also to the other members of the Journalism Department, Mike Grenby, Roger Patching and in particular the wonderful Joy Cameron Dow, who have helped and supported me in a myriad of ways. I must also thank the many members of staff and students for their help through discussions, emails and attendance and participation at seminars and classes.

Finally I must thank my longsuffering family and friends who have helped me through all trials and tribulations that accompany a PhD.