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# HYBRID GENDER IN METAMORPHOSIS:

analysis of literary journalism characteristics in online editions of the UOL TAB platform (2014–2018)



CÍNTIA SILVA DA CONCEIÇÃO

*Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba – Paraná – Brazil*

ORCID: 0000-0002-4246-2006

MYRIAN REGINA DEL VECCHIO-LIMA

*Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba – Paraná – Brazil*

ORCID: 0000-0002-1833-2332

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**ABSTRACT** – In the current scenario where long-form journalism is now an online narrative form, this work sought to understand if and how the characteristics of literary journalism (LJ), as defined by authors Kramer (1995), Wolfe (2005), Lima (2009) and Pena (2017), are integrated into the multimedia content of webjournalism. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to perform this, and the content analysis methodology was applied to a final sample of four reports from the UOL TAB platform. We found that LJ in digital writing uses multimedia features to enhance readers' experiences and, even though the written text remains a key element to the narrative, the multimedia resources attached to it make the genre original, and thus provide for a more immersive reading experience.

**Key word:** Literary journalism. Digital culture. Webjournalism. Long-form. UOL TAB.

## EVOLUÇÕES E EXPERIÊNCIAS EM UM GÊNERO HÍBRIDO: análise das características jornalístico-literárias nas edições da plataforma digital UOL TAB (2014–2018)

**RESUMO** – Em um cenário em que o jornalismo longform já faz parte das narrativas na web, este trabalho buscou compreender se e como as características do jornalismo literário (JL), definidas pelos autores Kramer (1995), Wolfe (2005), Lima (2009) e Pena (2017), são integradas ao conteúdo multimídia do webjornalismo. Para isso, foram utilizadas as abordagens quantitativa e qualitativa e aplicou-se a metodologia análise de conteúdo em uma amostra final de quatro reportagens da plataforma UOL TAB. Verificou-

se que o JL na escrita digital se apropria dos elementos multimídia com a intencionalidade de potencializar a experiência do leitor; e, embora o texto escrito continue como elemento central da narrativa, são os recursos multimídia acoplados a ele, que inovam o gênero, tornando a experiência do leitor mais imersiva.

**Palavras-chave:** Jornalismo literário. Cultura digital. Webjornalismo. Longform. TAB UOL.

### **GÉNERO HÍBRIDO EN METAMORFOSIS: análisis de las características periodístico-literarias en las ediciones de la plataforma digital UOL TAB (2014–2018)**

**RESUMEN** – En un escenario donde el periodismo de larga duración ya forma parte de las narrativas en la web, el trabajo buscó comprender si y cómo las características del periodismo literario (JL), definidas por los autores Kramer (1995), Wolfe (2005), Lima (2009) y Pena (2017), se integran en el contenido multimedia del periodismo web. Para ello, se utilizaron los enfoques cuantitativos y cualitativos y se aplicó la metodología de análisis de contenido a una muestra final de cuatro reportajes periodísticos de la plataforma UOL TAB. Se encontró que la JL en escritura digital se apropia de los elementos multimedia con la intención de mejorar la experiencia del lector; y, aunque el texto escrito sigue siendo un elemento central de la narrativa, son los recursos multimedia adjuntos que innovan el género, haciendo que la experiencia del lector sea más inmersiva.

**Palabras clave:** Periodismo literario. Cultura digital. Periodismo web. Long-form. TAB UOL.

## **1 Introduction**

Ever since the mid-1990s news organizations have had to adapt in order to occupy space in a digital environment that now encompasses a wide range of fields of activity due to the popularization of internet access. Old practices have been re-evaluated, journalists have had to learn and take on more activities and responsibilities, and alternative newspapers have brought more plurality to the internet. The expansion of digital culture has become a cause of concern in journalism, leading to new editorial practices in production routines and a search for new business models (Horn & Del Vecchio de Lima, 2020). However, this same environment provides numerous possibilities and creative tools which can lead to further changes and new forms for producing and consuming news content. It is within this scenario of change that the theme of this

article is based on literary journalism and how it has adapted to the digital writing space, combined with multimedia resources and the dissemination of long-form texts.

The debate over literary journalism in academic life is surrounded by questions, one of which is about its status: should it be framed as a subgenre of literature (an idea that came about mainly after major reports started to be published in book format) or as a subgenre of journalism, since it is mostly produced by journalists? We look at it as literary journalism with an autonomous quality; it feeds off the two sources that nourish it, and then turns into something hybrid and unique. This view is supported by the work of Borges (2013), who suggests it is a hybrid between journalism and literature:

When viewed as an independent path, literary journalism breaks from the norm by recognizing the subjective factor as a constitutive element of its statutes and methods, thus maintaining its credibility. It is a third discourse, one that pays tribute to traditional journalism, committed to expressing (as much as possible) the reality of the facts and also to literary creation, establishing itself under influences but encouraging breaks from both, with simultaneous similarities and differences. (Borges, 2013, pp.304–305).

A journalist and professor, Felipe Pena's view of literary journalism dialogues with that of Borges (2013), giving it an autonomous quality which benefits from the intersection between journalism and literature and "permanently transforms them in their specific domains, in addition to forming a third genre which also follows the inevitable path of infinite metamorphosis" (Pena, 2017, chapter 1). Monica Martinez (2016) also presents pertinent reflections on the hybrid place that literary journalism occupies, "in addition to issues related to objectivity, subjectivity, and structuring of the genre" (Conceição, 2020, p.26). When conducting her survey on the characteristics of literary journalism highlighted by Brazilian researchers, Martinez (2016) presents three specific characteristics of the genre: investigation; digestion, and understanding of the collected material; and literary writing style. Investigation represents the need for an in-depth text. Digestion and understanding of the collected material are linked to the understanding of the symbolic question of the text; understanding the psychological, social, and historical nuances. Literary writing style completes the three characteristics as it refers to techniques commonly used by fiction authors.

In his article on literary journalism as a discipline, Richard Keeble (2018) reiterates the academic debates about where this journalism should be placed as “literary journalism is a confusing term. In fact, it entails a provisional quality that captures many of the uncertainties and contradictions in the current writer’s situation” (Keeble, 2018, p.903). Keeble (2018, p.903) quotes British critic Mark Lawson when he states that we live in a “culture of hybrid blurs”.

In addition to discussing the legitimacy of literary journalism as a genre, Keeble also draws attention to how studies in this area are gradually becoming more commonplace in the world. “Recent work in Literary Journalism Studies include studies focused on South Africa, France, Germany, Poland, Argentina, Australia and Russia” (Keeble, 2018, p.902). In its own “Mission Statement”, *Literary Journalism Studies*<sup>1</sup> claims that a definitive description of the genre is not possible, but it does mention definitions given by a few researchers from around the world which help “to establish a common ground for its critical study” (IALJS, n.d.). Many of these definitions describe literary journalism texts as containing realistic descriptions, eyewitness reports, and an awareness of the ordinary that could be hiding something extraordinary within, “at the core of the genre lies a cultural revelation of the narrative form”(IALJS, n.d.).

In the publication’s first issue, Norman Sims (2009) raised questions about literary journalism’s place on the internet, the possibility of multiplatform literary journalism on the web, and the creation of a sustainable revenue model for maintaining this type of journalism that “requires immersion reporting, accuracy, careful structuring, and a lot of labor, no matter what medium is used”<sup>2</sup> (Sims, 2009, p.11). A few creative projects combining literary journalism with multimedia resources have been launched and discontinued on the web more than one decade after this initial question had been posed. Some of these projects are mentioned in this study, but what is more intriguing about the writings of Sims (2009) is the fact that this technology enables new discussions and connections that should attract academic attention, which the objective of this paper is.

Literary journalism texts contain several characteristics, as we shall see below, one of which we have already highlighted and is intrinsically related to long-form journalism: developing the narrative. It is well-known that professionals who wish to adopt this style need to maintain a close relationship with their characters and take the proper time to observe the scenario which is to be portrayed. As

such, texts that fit into this genre tend to be long and in-depth and contain many arguments and points of view; however, to flourish on the internet, this literary journalism needed a space, which is found with the spread of long-form on the web.

Of course, by being on another medium (after all, reading on screen is a different experience than reading on paper) literary journalism found powerful allies for its construction: multimedia. This paper bases the language of multimedia on the work of Salaverría (2014, p.30), who describes it as having eight elements: 1) text; 2) photography; 3) graphics, iconography and still images; 4) video; 5) digital animation; 6) oral communication; 7) music and sound effects, and 8) vibration. The future may hold even more elements<sup>3</sup>.

For Salaverría (2014, p.30), multimediality is, simply put, the “combination of at least two types of language in one single message”, but defining the concept crosses over into other paths with multiple languages and platforms. Although it is not a unanimous opinion since many platforms only use text and image, the theme “multimedia literary journalism” has already become part of the field of communication studies, the work of Fiona Giles and Georgia Hitch (2017) stands out in this regard.

This work aims to understand how the characteristics of literary journalism have been integrated into multimedia narratives on the internet. Since it is not possible to cover the entire universe of mediums that present this type of narrative, even with spatial and temporal samples applied, we selected the specific website, UOL TAB<sup>4</sup>, as our empirical sample. In establishing this objective, our main premise is that it is possible to draw a parallel between the characteristics of literary journalism and certain multimedia elements, for example, characteristics describing a scene are no longer found in written text, and instead appear in the form of photographs and videos; those characteristics related to the thematic study are included in texts and infographics, etc.

UOL TAB is a platform in the online universe, more commonly known as UOL. UOL was the first content portal in Brazil, first created in 1996, and has reached some milestones over the years, such as the launch of UOL TV (1997), the first television channel made entirely for the internet, with live feeds and the UOL WAP service<sup>5</sup> (2000), which allowed cell phone users to access the platform’s content anywhere. The UOL group is currently the largest content, technology, and services company in Brazil. Its homepage receives more than 114 million visitors per month<sup>6</sup>, and in 2014 launched UOL TAB; a platform for in-depth

webreporting. In addition to its innovative narrative and interface for cyberjournalism practices, TAB was created as a media product that offered an alternative commercial advertising format (Winques, 2018).

Initially, TAB reports are mainly written in long-form and then applied to multimedia resources, as former platform editor, Daniel Tozzi (personal communication, August 10, 2018) points out: “[...] we wanted to use as many resources as possible. Multimedia and interactive, we wanted to create a new narrative experience of light and in-depth informing”. We also selected TAB because of its regular periodicity and the fact that it is a native digital vehicle that invests in innovative design and a team of multimedia professionals working on its production. However, before examining what we found on TAB in terms of literary journalism, we need to lay out the methodological path we selected for our research.

## 2 The research path

Linearity was not one of the more comprehensive characteristics for developing the methodology in this study. The initial bibliographic research allowed us to identify numerous works, some of which are listed here as references<sup>7</sup>. Exploratory research was performed in conjunction with this to identify platforms that could serve as empirical objects for this work. An emphasis was given to TAB for reasons mentioned earlier.

Content analysis (Bardin, 2011) proved to be a productive methodological choice seeing as our research started with a quantitative study, which we then followed up with a qualitative study. The time frame for collecting material was set between the first issue<sup>8</sup> of TAB (published on 13/10/2014) and the last issue in 2018 (published on 12/10/2018); a total of 176 issues.

The lack of linearity mentioned earlier came about while we were preparing an Excel spreadsheet that, at first, included information such as the title of the issue, its publication date, an access link, editorial, multimedia elements – the information based on the eight elements listed by Salaverría (2014) – and columns with notes during the reading stage (Bardin, 2011). This first stage aimed to generate quantitative data, but, as the qualitative bias was essential, the spreadsheet was also analyzed by four theorists of literary journalism, as explained below.

Literary journalism has characteristics that one can perceive while reading, and these characteristics were the basis for developing the categories of research analysis. TAB issues were not categorized because

they are the empirical object, so we categorized the characteristics of literary journalism, which constitute the scientific object.

Many researchers are dedicated to identifying the characteristics of literary journalism, and after careful observation, we selected a total of four to use as the basis for our research: two Brazilians (Edvaldo Pereira Lima, 2009; Felipe Pena, 2017) and two Americans (Mark Kramer, 1995; Tom Wolfe, 2005). It is important to point out that these authors were specifically selected for this study, even taking into account that the “rules” of literary journalism, as stated by Kramer (1995), “are breakable, because when you count on the creativity of those involved, you can expect surprises” (Conceição, 2020, p.52). Of course, other authors were also important to our research, such as Monica Martinez and her critical reviews on literary journalism and its evolution in Brazil.

All the studies from the four aforementioned authors highlight 29 characteristics of literary journalism. Table 1 groups these characteristics in order to better visualize them:

**Table 1** – Characteristics of Literary Journalism

Kramer (1995)	Wolfe (2005)	Pena (2017)	Lima (2009)
Immersive and in-depth.	Describes scenes.	Maximize journalism resources.	Accuracy.
Ethics for readers and sources.	Status of character's life.	Goes beyond routine events.	Narrates a story.
Write about routine events.	Record of complete dialogues.	A broad view of reality.	Humanization.
Voice.	3 <sup>rd</sup> person point of view.	Citizenship practice.	Understanding.
Style.		Breaks from the lead.	Universal topic.
Unfixed position of the author.		A shift from basic definitions.	Individual style and voice.
Structure adapted to history.		Permanence/continuity.	Immersive.
Creation of meaning.			Symbolism.
			Creativity.
			Responsibility.

Source: Conceição (2020), prepared by the aforementioned authors.

A quick look at the table shows us that the strength of literary journalism lies in working with routine events (Kramer, 1995), but doing so in such a way that goes beyond its limits (Pena, 2017); thus, something considered ordinary could become more in-depth if a journalist uses creativity, symbolism, and humanization to tell that story (Lima, 2009). The setting describes the scenes and gives a complete and in-depth characterization of the characters (Wolfe, 2005); it helps the reader become immersed in the narrative, which is key to the continuity of the story (Pena, 2017). The table also shows us that theorists can look at the same object and these characteristics often intersect; categorization in the research is based on this intersection. Working with 29 characteristics during the analyses would be a formidable and drawn-out task, so they were instead grouped into categories following a similar set of criteria. Table 2 explains to the reader our thought process behind this categorization:

**Table 2** – Categorization of literary journalism characteristics

Categories	Based on characteristics	Description
In-depth/ immersive.	Kramer (1995) – Immersive/in-depth study of a topic.  Pena (2017) – Broad view of reality, permanence/continuity.  Lima (2009) – Immersive.	This category contains reports that contextualize the topic (historical, political, or social), that present arguments from different viewpoints, testimonies from experts, and data from academic research or professional institutes.
Narrator.	Kramer (1995) – Individual voice and style.  Lima (2009) – Style (individual and own voice), creativity.	This category contains reports that present the narrator's own language or style – this narrator could be a character in the actual story or a person who gives his or her impression on the topic – contrary to the idea of the journalist not being able to be included as a character in the report.

<p>Topic.</p>	<p>Kramer (1995) – Depiction/ routine events.</p> <p>Pena (2017) – Citizenship practice.</p> <p>Lima (2009) – Universal topic.</p>	<p>The topics in this category can be broad but tend to include reports which are less likely to be covered by the hegemonic press and focus on an individual's personal story.</p>
<p>Literature.</p>	<p>Kramer (1995) – Unfixed position of author and digression, creation of meaning, structure adapted to history.</p> <p>Wolfe (2005) – Description of scenes, status of character's life, record of complete dialogue, 3<sup>rd</sup> person point of view.</p> <p>Lima (2009) –Symbolism, humanization, narrates a story.</p>	<p>This category contains narratives that present well-constructed characters that have a cohesive story in the text and are not just included as a source. Scenarios are built that put the reader in the story; in other words, texts that are not common in hegemonic journalism.</p>
<p>Journalism.</p>	<p>Kramer (1995) – Ethics for the reader and sources.</p> <p>Pena (2017) – Goes beyond routine events. Maximize journalism resources, break from the lead, a shift from basic definitions.</p> <p>Lima (2009) – Accuracy, understanding, responsibility.</p>	<p>This category contains texts that relate to how a journalist structures the story that is being told, from the ethical responsibility for the information to the plurality of sources and research institutions from which the data are obtained.</p>

Source: Conceição (2020), prepared by the aforementioned authors.

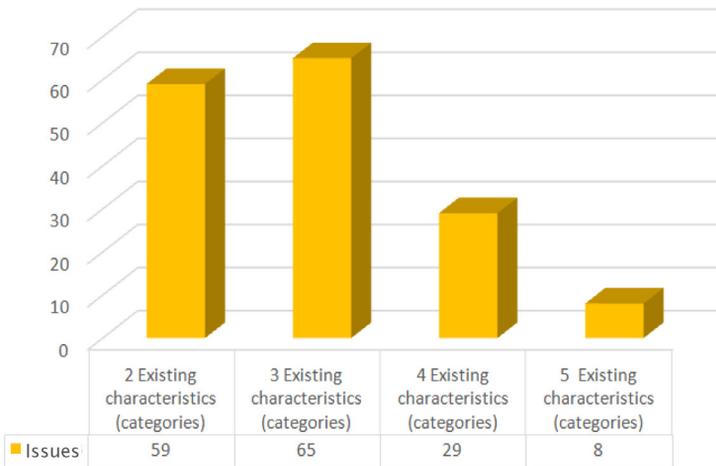
The 29 characteristics highlighted by the selected authors are separated into five analytical categories for our qualitative research on the issues: In-depth/immersive; Narrator; Topic; Journalism; and Literature.

The second stage of the Excel spreadsheet (mentioned earlier) began after having included the categories column in the spreadsheet;

we went over the 176 reports and identified the characteristics of literary journalism in each one of them, in accordance with the categories presented in Table 2.

Once the spreadsheet was finished and the quantitative data collected, we excluded the issues considered impertinent for qualitative analysis. Setting aside those issues which contained only videos or images, a total of 161 issues remained. We then discovered, based on the number of characteristics (categories) in which they could be allocated, that 59 issues fit into at least two categories. Most of the issues (65) contained at least three characteristics (categories) of literary journalism. A further 29 issues contained four characteristics, and eight issues featured all characteristics, as shown in Graph 1:

**Graph 1** – Issues separated according to characteristics/categories



Source: Conceição (2020).

We pre-selected the eight issues of TAB that represented the five categories; however, as this was quite a large number for the type of qualitative analysis that we had chosen to carry out, we concluded that a second stage would be necessary, one based on the eight multimedia elements (Salaverría, 2014) mentioned in the introduction. Four issues of TAB were selected for analysis in this second stage which, in addition to conforming to the five categories of analysis, used more than four multimedia elements to build their narratives, as shown in Table 3:

**Table 3** – Issues selected for qualitative analysis

	Title	Link	Publication Date	Issue
26	Transgender	<a href="https://tab.uol.com.br/trans/">https://tab.uol.com.br/trans/</a>	04/27/2015	Behavior
54	Human Wasteland	<a href="https://tab.uol.com.br/moradores-de-rua/">https://tab.uol.com.br/moradores-de-rua/</a>	7/12/2015	Society
113	Reconstructing Vinicius	<a href="https://tab.uol.com.br/bullying-suicidio">https://tab.uol.com.br/bullying-suicidio</a>	05/08/2017	Behavior
143	Farewell to Firearms	<a href="https://tab.uol.com.br/jovens-fundacao-casa">https://tab.uol.com.br/jovens-fundacao-casa</a>	01/15/2018	Society

Source: Conceição (2020).

A follow-up interview was conducted with the platform's former editor, Daniel Tozzi, on February 13, 2020, via Skype. Although this interview did not provide any theoretical clarifications, it was important to remove doubts about how the platform worked during our analysis period. Due to the fact that Tozzi had already given several interviews about TAB (available online), we focused on subjects pertinent to our research, such as the graphics and multimedia for the issues and how these aspects have changed over the years, issues like the freedom these platform journalists have to choose whether the narrative they want to use has a conversational tone or is written from the first-person point of view, and investigating how literary journalism was inserted into the publication.

Building the methodology is where most of the theory for the research comes into play as the entire process for selecting the corpus was based on the characteristics of literary journalism and multimedia language. Before proceeding with the analysis, it is best to explain how these processes are situated within digital culture.

### 3 Bringing literary journalism and digital culture together

The editorial and design changes at UOL TAB (outlined in the next topic in more detail) took place after a managerial decision was made to meet the increasing demand for smartphone access (Tozzi, 2020).

Benakouche (1999), when relating technology and society, re-establishes two concepts from Hughes (1983) to explain the process of how society adopts technology: *reverse salient* and

*momentum*. Reverse salient “suggests the need for collective and concentrated action when a technological system presents obstacles – or weaknesses – to its development” (Benakouche, 1999, p.6). Identifying what Benakouche calls “critical problems” means they can then be analyzed and improved for continued expansion. Momentum refers to the stage in which technology gains wide social/institutional acceptance and a favorable context that allows for rapid expansion with a certain level of autonomy.

Smartphones are a clear example of this process. Given the national scenario of digital culture, the Survey on the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Brazilian Homes (TIC Domicílios, 2017, p.113) shows that, despite social inequality, it still significantly affects access to the internet, “the number of households with internet access in the country continues to grow, with a total of 42 million homes with access”. This increased access does not correspond to an increased number of homes with computers since “the poorer areas and areas with limited infrastructure mostly use cellular phones to connect to the internet” (pp.113–114). Focusing on the use of mobile devices, TIC Domicílios points out that, “this is the first time that the number of users who access the internet exclusively by cell phones (49% of the population) has reached the same level as the number of users who access it by both computer and cell phone” (47% of the population) (p.115).

This reorganization of socio-cultural behaviors leads journalism to update itself by adapting its content to these demands. The democratization of mobile devices made it easier for people from different social spheres to be able to access online content; however, this does not equate to greater consumption of news. TIC Domicílios (2017, p.137) also observed the most common cultural activities enjoyed by 71% of Brazilians online as “watching videos, programs, films or series, and listening to music”, while reading newspapers and magazines “was mentioned by just over half of all users (55%)”.

The digital writing space is a vast field for journalism to conquer, but in order to “compete” with other activities it needs to be open to innovative formats that engage readers and grab their attention. According to the scope of this research, long-form journalism is one of these formats. For Dowling and Vogan (2014), tablet screens are favorable to long reads and are a good investment for the editorial market: “Digital long-form is not only the latest news format in convergence culture but also a trend that

offers an unprecedented potential for news and entertainment media organizations” (Dowling & Vogan, 2014, p.212).

Our idea of longform journalism is based on what Longhi (2014) characterizes as “long articles with a large amount of content which have grown in popularity on the Web in recent years, on news sites, news aggregators, and non-fiction long-form” (Longhi, 2014, p.912). The articles in this category are more in-depth, they cover a variety of aspects on the same topic, they are not short-lived, and make occasional use of multimedia elements. An article can also be long-form according to the length of accuracy, contextualization, and development. “Articles with these characteristics require a slower read and a reader willing to devote time to it” (Longhi & Winqes, 2015, p.113). Large multimedia reports are the news format that commonly use long-form, and are also the format used by TAB to write most of its issues.

According to Nora Berning (2011, p.4), “the electronic properties of the web, that is, hypertextuality, multimediality, and interactivity, not only allow for new narrative possibilities but also offer enhanced means of immersion for the reader”, which is why the space seems so conducive to hybrid work. In addition to making the reading experience more immersive, multimedia literary journalism can renew discussions related to the authenticity of a report, something that was criticized during the period of New Journalism in the 1960s/1970s:

Similar to the process of immersion, dramatic devices employed by New Journalists almost half a century ago are being transformed into participatory activities on the Internet. Moreover, the features of the Internet allow for new forms of multi-perspectival narration. Taken together electronic properties can lead to an increase in authenticity and credibility for online narrative journalism. (Berning, 2011, p.4).

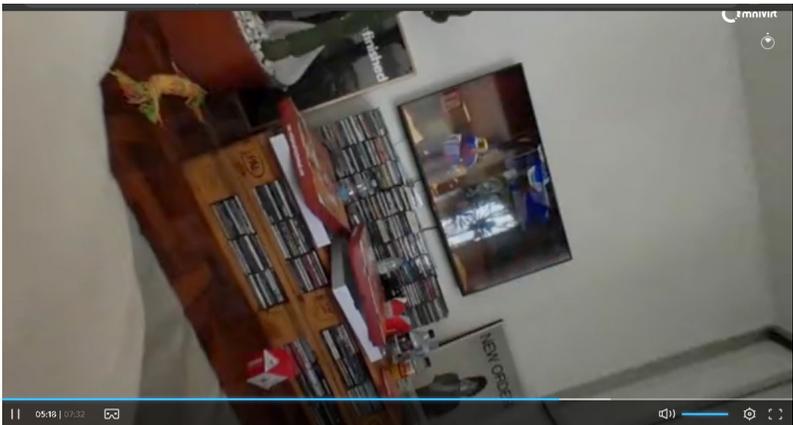
Audio and video are used to build the narrative, and textual descriptions of characters and scenarios can now be viewed in 360° format. When looking at the aesthetics of digital literary journalism, David Dowling (2017) realizes that aspects such as audience engagement and a narrative written in a film editing style are the main points behind hybrid narratives in the digital writing space. Using media convergence to tell a story has caused the industry to become more and more economically competitive, which in turn has led to many innovations in digital literary journalism (Dowling, 2017).

We found some narratives on the TAB platform that creatively mix text and multimedia elements to facilitate reader immersion. One example of this can be seen in issue #150, *Social Depression*<sup>9</sup>, more specifically, the video included in it entitled *Quest for a Cure*. The article in this issue presents depression as something that is born in society, and not in the individual. The text itself is documental but the video, which was recorded in 360° format, is similar to that of literary journalism.

The video is of a character suffering from depression, and the reader sees everything through the eyes of this character, listening to his conversation with colleagues and even hearing the thoughts in his head. The purpose of the almost eight-minute long video is to place the reader in the mind and body of someone who is suffering from depression and gradually begins to show signs of improvement throughout the video.

The video is similar to a “third-person point of view” (Wolfe, 2005), where the journalist is narrating the story through the eyes of the character – this multimedia feature is what gives the reader the impression of a third-person point of view. Wolfe (2005) did receive some criticism for this characteristic as the journalist cannot read the character’s mind and pretend to know what that character observed, or thought, in the scene. Although this criticism can be avoided (as nothing prevents the journalist from asking the character how he was feeling or what he was thinking at that particular time) using the 360° video adds new aspects to the discussion.

**FIGURE1:** 360° VIDEO



Source: TAB<sup>10</sup>

In addition to more common features such as videos and photographs, TAB also used features such as games and interactive quizzes to test how well readers understood the article, there are comics depicting scenarios and characters who disappear in wars and dictatorships, and audio clips of specific sounds (for example, from the underground in the city of São Paulo) so people from around the country can hear them. These features, together with the article, help to both increase knowledge on the topics covered and create meaning and symbolism, not to mention encourage participation and generate authenticity and credibility.

This type of reporting adds to literary journalism, and the dissemination of long-form content on the web opens up a vast field in which this hybrid genre can experiment. Following the idea that literary journalism is capable of flourishing in the digital writing environment, Jacobson et al. (2015, p.2) state that “multimedia features of this long-form journalism are not just representations of the technological adeptness of today’s journalists but also the driving force behind a new period of literary journalism”. Long-form journalism allows literary journalism to highlight one of its main characteristics: further development. The availability of multimedia features, which can help to contextualize scenarios and present characters, are tools that can help literary journalism evolve further.

During our research, it became clear that having great tools for telling a story means having great responsibility of knowing how to use these tools. At this point, we turn to Fiona Giles and Georgia Hitch (2017), who created a multimedia syntax for literary journalism reporting. They named three categories of narratives: a) Multimedia-Enhanced Literary Journalism; b) Interactive; and c) Integrated:

Multimedia-Enhanced Literary Journalism mostly resembles traditional literary journalism; the multimedia features are used only to complete the story. As for the narratives that fall into this category, given the “lack of interactivity between readers and the feature’s multimedia elements—as nothing more than a click is needed to begin a slideshow or video — the reading experience is primarily literary” (Giles & Hitch, 2017, p.79). However, even though interactivity between the multimedia resources and the readers is low, the technical features in this category enhance the textual narrative and allow for the reader to view graphics, images, and videos that help to illustrate the story, yet “despite its wealth of multimedia, these merely supplement the writing and, if removed, would leave the narrative intact” (p.79)<sup>11</sup>.

Interactive Multimedia Literary Journalism is the opposite of enhanced multimedia as it contains an excess of multimedia features and readers are required to access them to continue reading. This restricts their autonomy and impedes their emotional engagement with the narrated story. The third category described by Giles and Hitch (2017), Integrated Multimedia Literary Journalism, represents the perfect junction between enhanced and interactive multimedia. The multimedia features here help to create dramatic tension, so much so that if they were removed and only the textual narrative remained, the story would be left with gaps needing to be filled. According to these researchers, it is multimedia that gives this category its humanizing features.

The text is the basis for all three types of narratives, guiding readers to the multimedia features which they may or may not want to access. If a reader does not have a headset or a stable internet connection and cannot, therefore, listen to the audio clips or watch the videos in the report, the text needs to be solid enough to tell a coherent story, yet at the same time cannot be so tedious as to repeat all the information in the multimedia features. It is no small task to have a text that encourages one to consume multimedia within but also does not prevent one's understanding of the story if said person cannot or does not want to consume it.

#### **4 Literary journalism in the digital environment: the UOL TAB experience (2014–2018)**

The official history of TAB began in October 2014, when Universo Online (UOL) launched its weekly multimedia editorial project to publish long-form, high-quality and non-standard reports already practiced by the platform. When asked about the new vehicle in an interview, former UOL content director, Rodrigo Flores, said that “the goal is to create a new experience in content. TAB is UOL’s answer to our audience’s need to consume quality content in creative, interesting, and interactive formats” (UOL, 2014).

After examining the four years of publications used in this paper we noticed at least two major phases. The first phase occurred between issues 1 to 66 (10/2014 to 03/2016), where the layouts matched the topics those issues covered. Every week during this period TAB presented a different layout, all supported by a

multimedia language full of features, combining illustrations, images, infographics (static and/or animated) sound and video resources, tests, games, and surveys.

The second phase, from issue 67 on (04/04/2016) and claimed by Ito (2018, p.215) as the template of TAB, “corresponds to the point when the reports started to make use of more simplified presentations”. This change began after a managerial decision to improve smartphone access was made. According to TAB’s former publisher, the readers’ experience is of utmost importance for TAB, and this managerial decision was made at a time when access via smartphones was clearly on the rise and their layouts, built with more elaborate layers, did not offer the same usability:

[...] I think that the first year and a half to two years at TAB involved a lot of experimenting with building multimedia narratives, there were many variations, basically, and each issue was quite different from the other. And when you look at all the possibilities of narrative construction, well, that frees you up from having to convey information in the traditional text format. All of this also has to make sense in terms of providing easier consumption for users of that information. We considered the mobile experience not as pleasant, as instinctive, as we would have liked it to be. We needed to improve this performance on mobiles, and also make the process of building TAB a little easier. So a change was put in place, some parameters were slightly readjusted towards a very creative, very qualified art direction. (Tozzi, 2020, personal communication, February 13<sup>th</sup>).

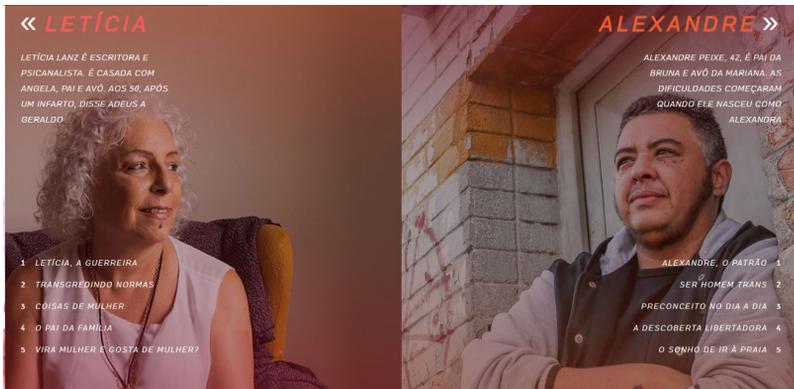
In the first phase, the layout for TAB with its countless features and alternating layers for reading on tablets, which generally have larger screens than smartphones, was largely unaffected; but when replicating the format on smaller screens, the layout was not as versatile. This template phase uses a presentation screen followed by an effective, introductory paragraph. The texts use a standardized font – which varies between gray and black – in the background and for videos. Features such as surveys, tests, interactive elements, and games are no longer used, while infographics (both static and animated), videos, and images are maintained.

The four issues analyzed in this study cover both phases; two of the issues cover the first phase – *Transgender* and *Human Wasteland* – and the other two cover the second phase – *Reconstructing Vinicius* and *Farewell to Arms*. It would not be possible to provide a detailed look at all the stages of analysis in this article as there is not enough space to do so, as a result, we present two of these stages. The first stage includes a summary of the issues and multimedia features

(Salaverría, 2014) while the second develops the analysis of the four issues, focusing on the structure of the categories/characteristics of literary journalism, as explained in the research methodology.

Issue number 26 of TAB, *Transgender*, published on 04/27/2015, presents two main characters, both of whom are transgender: Leticia, a writer and psychoanalyst who, after suffering a heart attack, makes the decision to live as a transsexual woman; and Alexandre, who dreams of one day being able to work with children again (Figure 2). This issue resembles a profile that is based on the characters' experiences, but it also opens up to broader issues such as acceptance, transition, prejudice, and society. The multimedia features (Salaverría, 2014) include text, video, photography, oral speech, and infographics. The issue has six blocks of text, 20 videos, 21 photographs, three oral speeches, two infographics, and one hyperlink.

**Figure2** –*Transgender* Issue



Source: TAB.<sup>12</sup>

During our analysis of this issue, we noticed that the text plays a more important role than the other features in terms of building the narrative; it is used to both present the characters and to develop the story. Videos were also a well-used feature, especially when the characters relate their own experiences. Photography was used to develop the characters' stories through symbolism and to address the issue of transsexuality in society, which Alexandre does to portray his day-to-day life.

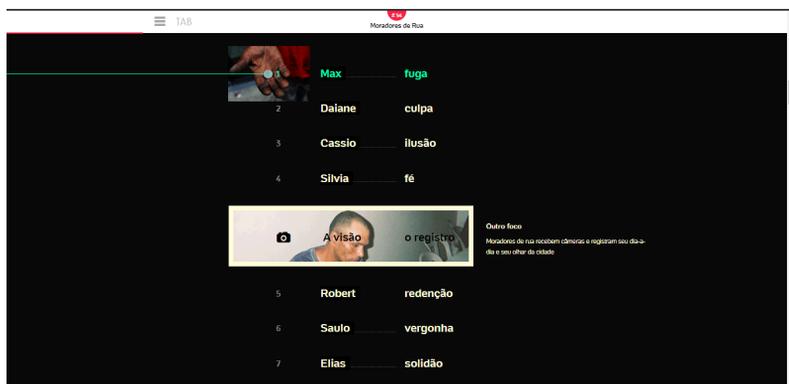
Oral speech was used to describe the characters' experiences of struggle and prejudice, and also for more symbolic purposes, for example, when Leticia talks about her snake necklace. The

infographic helped to develop the story by simplifying some aspects of transsexuality for readers.

Issue number 54, *Human Wasteland*, was the second one we analyzed, published on 12/07/2015. The text presents the story of seven homeless people. Symbolism (Lima, 2009) is already included in the title of the article, referring to these human beings as being cast aside and uncared for. This is an interesting choice for the title as in Portugal a “wasteland” is a space managed by a local community, while in Brazil, a “wasteland” describes something which has been abandoned, and has no protection or care. The symbolism here is that people in a situation of vulnerability should be cared for by the community, but instead, they are ignored and go largely unseen.

Like the previous issue, this one starts by depicting the characters’ experiences but then goes on to deal with social, behavioral, and psychological issues (Figure 3). The multimedia features used to build this narrative consisted of eight blocks of text, seven videos, 79 photographs, seven oral speeches, four hyperlinks, and seven infographics.

**Figure3** – Character menu for *Human Wasteland* issue



Source: TAB.<sup>13</sup>

The multimedia features for building the narrative make use of a variety of characteristics of literary journalism. Oral speech helped develop the story using statements from the social psychologist, and the infographic helped present data on the diet, health, and well-being of homeless people. The text was the feature that allowed the journalist to be more creative in his language and present the characters, who expressed themselves on video and in photographs.

The hyperlink used in the infographic gave readers some tips on how they could help homeless people in their day-to-day lives.

Issue 112, *Reconstructing Vinicius*, published on 8/5/2017, presents topics such as bullying and suicide. The text starts describing Vinicius' experiences of suffering from bullying at school, attempting to commit suicide, and then eventually discovering a way to express himself through the drag movement (Figure 4). The multimedia features include 14 blocks of text, one video, one infographic, and 20 photographs.

**Figure4** –Cover image for *Reconstructing Vinicius*

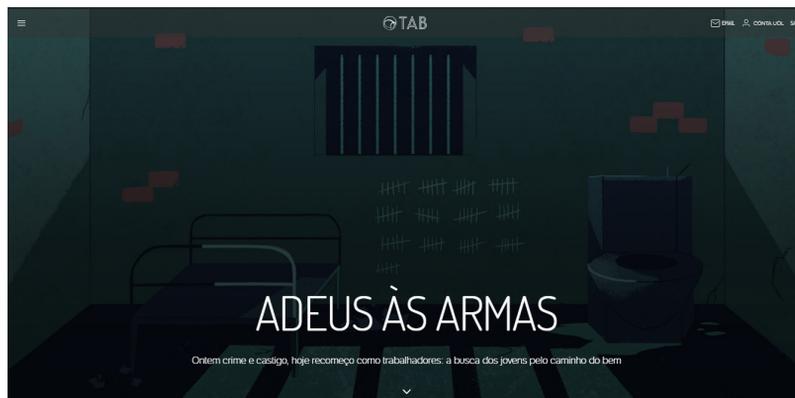


Source: TAB.<sup>14</sup>

When we look at this issue we can see that the text plays an all-important role: it is the feature that guides the reader through the narrative. In contrast to the other issues we analyzed in this paper where the video content helps tell the story, this issue does not tell a story; it is used as a tool to promote a discussion on bullying and psychological disorders. The narrative photography is approximate to an essay in which we see the main character become a drag queen, building the profile of Vinicius and recording the physical transformation that was so vital to him recovering his self-esteem.

The last issue we analyzed was number 143, *Farewell to Arms*, published on 01/15/2018, which deals with the system that imprisons and rehabilitates young offenders. This web report tells the story of two youths who, after completing their debt to society, were referred to an assisted freedom program. The multimedia features in this issue include seven text blocks, two videos, one infographic, one hyperlink, and four photographs.

**Figure5** – Cover image for *Farewell to Arms*



Source: TAB.

The role of the text in this issue is recurrent. It presents and develops the characters' stories, includes testimonies from three specialists on the topic, and presents numerical data. The two videos had different functions. The first video presented and cross-checked data on the system that imprisons and rehabilitates young offenders, while the second video focused on the experiences of those youths who went through this system and the testimonies of those who work and live with the young offenders in prison. The infographic helped to expand on the issue, detailing the experiences of a young offender in the judicial system. The hyperlink adds to the information by presenting further news related to the topic.

While analyzing the four issues we found characteristics of literary journalism using immersion/further development, especially in the texts and videos. Except for one case where oral speech is the main feature used to include accounts from specialists, in general, the text is the primary feature used to contextualize a topic, to include scientific data, or to use numbers to prove certain information. The video provides a way to develop a different type of narrative, one that comes from the characters who live the situations covered in the issues. This is the case with *Farewell to Arms*, which includes statements from social workers who work with young people, and in *Transgender*, when the character Letícia uses her knowledge as a gender researcher to provide detailed information. The inclusion of text in the videos also served to make the statements of the characters clearer, something which was used in these two issues.

The characteristics that come from the narrator were the

only ones that focused on just one feature, the text. This is because journalists, as narrators, are not present in any of the other features like video or oral speech. Even though only one of the selected issues uses a first-person writing style, throughout the narrative journalists act as a guide, helping to make certain aspects of the characters' stories clearer to readers as these characters are allowed to narrate the facts of their own lives, which might not always come across clearly to others. The symbolism and flow in the writing styles are other factors that differentiate one journalist from another and prevent them from falling into the field of textual standardization.

The characteristics of literary journalism that come from the theme, although well distributed during the narratives considering the theme is the starting point for everything, were frequently developed even further with infographics. Three of the four issues we analyzed used this feature to provide more detail to certain aspects of the theme. This may have been done to avoid giving the text an instructional feel to it and instead make the narrative more dynamic. The infographic is a more "eye-catching" and, in some cases, interactive way to inform readers.

We noticed that the characteristics of literary journalism that come from literature are more common in texts, photography, and videos; these were the features used the most to further develop the characters and reproduce the scenario in which they live. The detailed descriptions were not provided through text, particularly in the pre-template issues, and were instead provided through videos and photographs.

The videos give the characters more depth as the readers can hear their voices, see their facial expressions, the way they move and interact, as a result, the journalist does not need to spend time addressing these aspects in-depth in the text. The act of listening to the characters narrating aspects of their lives and their experiences can bring readers closer to these individuals as all the accounts are given firsthand, and not related through the eyes of a third party.

The photographs, which include captions, play an important role in recognizing the characters, as they include subtle differences that may go unnoticed in the video – details about their clothing, the furniture, or the decoration. Lastly, the text continues to play an important role by reinforcing points that the reader may not have paid attention to but are fundamental to the theme, while the dramatic tension is mostly provided through the photographs and videos.

The characteristics of literary journalism that come from journalism are most prevalent in the texts, videos, and infographics, although they are spread out in practically all the features in different issues. This variety of tools in multimedia narratives helps to enhance journalism resources as information can be widely transmitted through different and more creative means. Taking into consideration that the issues analyzed for this paper focus on the characters' stories, the issue of ethics with the reader and the source is something that needs to be carefully observed; however, using features such as audio and video to build a narrative seems to be an advantage since the characters can appear more clearly and actively within their own stories.

## 5 Final considerations

We are not saying that literary journalism has completely adapted to the digital medium, that might never happen, but it is alive and is constantly changing to fit into new journalistic forms.

The text plays an important role in *Transgender*, the first issue we analyzed: it supports most of the characteristics of literary journalism, but the photography and video features are used to immerse readers in the characters' stories, which become more intriguing when said characters narrate their own experiences. In *Human Wasteland*, on the other hand, we do not perceive the role of any multimedia feature – the characteristics of literary journalism are spread out evenly among them. *Reconstructing Vinicius* marks the post-template period of the site being the only story where the journalist narrates in the first person. The text also plays an important role in that issue and *Farewell to Arms*, but the video in the former expands on the theme and does not focus on the character, while the video in the latter gives the reader a closer, more immersive contact with the characters.

When revisiting the characteristics of literary journalism in multimedia narratives, separated into categories established by the similarity criterion (Bardin, 2011), we realized that, unlike narratives that spread out pre-determined characteristics of literary journalism for each multimedia feature, there is no standard as the characteristics are well distributed among the features. Contrary to what we expect of a premise, the characteristics of literary journalism

in the narratives are not so solid as one cannot draw a direct parallel between the features and the characteristics. A video, for example, is used to both present characters and to further develop the topic. One can say that the parallel between characteristics of literary journalism and multimedia features provides a direct relationship not with each other, but with the immersive experience that the reader is expected to have when consuming that narrative and the adaptations will be linked to that experience. This point could be developed further in a study focusing on how readers receive this content.

Although we did not focus on the quantitative phase of the research in this article, it is interesting to note that, in general, the overall importance of text in TAB is evident as 159 out of a total of 175 issues use this feature as a basis to build their narratives. The next prevalent feature is videos, included in 132 issues, and photographs in 114 issues. Even when we look at the pre-template period, which encompasses 66 issues (including one in comic book format), these features continue to be the most often used. We can see that the features included in the post-template period, in addition to being easily accessed by mobile devices, were still being used to build narratives. When interviewed, the former editor acknowledged the lack of interactivity between readers and the content, but stated that this decision was made to keep TAB viable long term:

In fact, there was a greater standardization in the narrative, [...] the traditional text ends up looking a little more because you end up not having as many multimedia or interactive resources to build the story. [...] You end up using more art, infographics, and texts. So this adjustment was made while also thinking a lot about mobile performance, and keeping the project viable. It was always going to be a project that required a lot of expertise; it was expensive to develop and adjustments were made to keep it viable, to keep it healthy. (Tozzi, 2020, personal communication, February 13<sup>th</sup>).

When looking at all the issues in our study, we discovered that the ones that exhibit all the characteristics/categories of literary journalism represent only 5% of the 176 total reports. This data shows that there has been minimal attention given to this type of narrative, despite all of its potentials. It is impossible to be emphatic when the analyzed material represents only a small portion of a larger universe of national and international media outlets using long-form journalism and, perhaps, using this space to present literary journalism texts.

However, during the development of this paper, we found countless creative projects that work with this type of journalism

and that deserve the attention of other researchers who have a shared interest in the subject. Some more classic examples are the multimedia report *Snow Fall*<sup>15</sup> from The New York Times and the *Tudo Sobre*<sup>16</sup> specials from Folha de S. Paulo. The Washington Post published a large multimedia report with A New Age of Walls, a three-part series describing the global crisis of immigrants. El País also published a large multimedia special entitled 28 Days, 28 Stories to Break the Taboos surrounding Menstruation<sup>17</sup>, which takes a look at the menstrual cycle from different points of view and formats.

In addition to the major newspapers, we have the interactive report *ReBuilding Haiti*<sup>18</sup>, a project<sup>19</sup> divided into six chapters that starts with the earthquake that occurred in the capital of Haiti in January 2010 and places the reader in the role of one of the people helping to rebuild the site – this project is even cited by Giles and Hitch (2017) as an example of interactive multimedia literary journalism.

The work developed with TAB generated relevant discussions surrounding the research theme and the characteristics of web journalism and digital culture. This was mainly due to the platform going through transformations during our analysis period. It adapted to the needs of the public and the market, something that was key for the project's longevity.

These adaptations and transformations also occurred with the scientific object of research, literary journalism, which became part of the digital writing space after decades of being linked to print. The essence has not been lost throughout this process; it is established by the characteristics studied in this paper, unwavered from its goal of creating long-lasting journalism which brings stories to the public that would otherwise go unnoticed.

When we look specifically at multimedia literary journalism, it is not yet possible to know if it will consolidate itself as a genre. If it were possible to label it, it would be a subgenre within literary journalism, but as we discussed throughout this paper, it is constantly evolving and any future technologies that may be added to it could continue to change that scenario. From the classic reporting book to the long-form report published on the web, literary journalism remains relevant, using the reader's experience as a basis to continue existing and evolving in the face of new forms and formats of news consumption. This reading experience, with the use of multimedia resources, could lead to greater reader participation, in addition to adding greater credibility and authenticity in the experience of producing and consuming literary news stories.

## NOTES

- 1 Academic peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the International Association of Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS). Retrieved from <https://ialjs.org/publications/>
- 2 Original excerpt: “Literary journalism requires immersion reporting, accuracy, careful structuring, and a lot of labor, no matter what medium is used”.
- 3 Fonseca et al.(2020), based on Salaverria (2014), also include virtual and augmented reality as multimedia elements as they contain narratives with details quite close to literary journalism.
- 4 Retrieved from <https://tab.uol.com.br/edicoes/>
- 5 Wireless Application Protocol (3G) is an international technical standard for accessing information over mobile wireless devices, for example, smartphones.
- 6 Data taken from the UOL portal. Retrieved from <https://sobreuol.noticias.uol.com.br/historia/>
- 7 During our bibliographic research we came across a number of important authors who write about LJ in Anglo-Saxon and Ibero-American literature, such as Norman Sims and Antonio Cuartero, among countless others around the world. In accordance with our research proposal we selected well-known and often cited authors in journalism courses, two from Brazil and two from North America.
- 8 During the time frame we dedicated to researching TAB, the platform was producing one web report per week. It called these reports “issues” and we also opted to use the same nomenclature.
- 9 Published on 03/12/2018. Retrieved from <https://tab.uol.com.br/edicao/depressao/#depressao-social>
- 10 Image information: in the video frame, the character is lying on the couch, he hears the intercom ringing and is thinking about how he can't get up to get the food.
- 11 Original excerpt: “Despite its wealth of multimedia, these merely

- supplement the writing and, if removed, would leave the narrative intact”.
- 12 Image information: TAB split screen which allows readers to choose which character they would like to start reading about.
  - 13 Image information: readers can select which story they wish to follow by placing the cursor over the characters’ names and clicking.
  - 14 Image information: the cover for the issue uses the pre-template standard.
  - 15 Retrieved from [www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/index.html#/?part=tunnel-creek](http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/index.html#/?part=tunnel-creek)
  - 16 The Folha de S.Paulo newspaper is controlled by Grupo Folha, one of the main media conglomerates in Brazil, and is responsible for a series of special web-reports entitled *Tudo Sobre*. The texts from this series deal with various subjects, including deforestation, water crisis, illegal trade, and dictatorship. Available at [www1.folha.uol.com.br/tudosobre/](http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/tudosobre/)
  - 17 Retrieved from [https://elpais.com/agr/28\\_dias\\_tabu\\_regla/a](https://elpais.com/agr/28_dias_tabu_regla/a)
  - 18 Retrieved from <http://apps.rue89.com/haiti/en/>
  - 19 Created in conjunction with the European Journalism Centre, Rue89 and The Pixel Hunt.

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**CÍNTIA SILVA DA CONCEIÇÃO.** Journalist with a Master's Degree in Communication from the Postgraduate Communication Program at the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil. She is a researcher at the Communication and Cyber Culture (Click Group). E-mail: cintiasilva.jornalismo@gmail.com

**MYRIANDEL VECCHIO-LIMA.** Journalist with a Ph.D. in Environment and Development from the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil; she has a post-doctorate in Information and Communication Sciences (Digital Journalism) from Université Lyon 2, Lyon, France with a Capes scholarship. She has a Master's Degree in Communication from the Methodist University of São Paulo. She is head of the Click Research Group (Communication and Cyber Culture) and a member of the Network for Contemporary Media Narrative Research (Renami). E-mail: myriandel@gmail.com

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