**TOWARD NEW JOURNALISM(S)**

**Affective news, hybridity, and liminal spaces**

**Author:**

Zizi Papacharissi. Department of Communication, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 1007 W Harrison Street, 1140 Behavioral Sciences Building (MC 132), Chicago, IL 60607. zizi@uic.edu

**TOWARD NEW JOURNALISM(S)**

**Affective news, hybridity, and liminal spaces**

**Zizi Papacharissi**

*Research indicates that information sharing and conversational uses of online media by journalists, news organizations, and individual users render complex and networked social awareness systems that evolve beyond traditional ecologies of journalism. This essay examines the form of news* prodused *through networked platforms that converge broadcast and oral traditions of storytelling into contemporary news practices. Synthesizing existing research, I argue that the shape news takes on is* affective*, the form of production is* hybrid*, and that spaces produced discursively through news storytelling frequently function as* electronic elsewheres*, or as social spaces that support marginalized and liminal viewpoints.* Affective news streams *are defined as news collaboratively constructed out of subjective experience, opinion, and emotion all sustained by and sustaining ambient news environments. They provide liminal layers to storytelling, but also a way for storytelling audiences to feel their own place into a developing news story.*

**Introduction**

In *Vers une architecture* (Toward an Architecture), Le Corbusier, a pioneer of modern architecture, famously proclaimed a new direction for architects, meant to fundamentally reshape how we design and interact with buildings. Envisioning style as the direct outcome of socio-cultural context, and as such, always in flux, he directed architects to focus on form instead. Thus the stylized contraptions of art deco and eclecticism were to be abandoned for exterior forms that directly derived from the interior, with style to be organically set by the epoch. The technological advancements of engineering were beginning to enable architectural forms well beyond the scope of what architecture had previously perceived. Engineers, Le Corbusier (1931, 31) provoked, “overwhelm with their calculations our expiring architecture.” A new architecture must thus emerge, that utilizes technology to present solutions to how we organize walls and space, light and shade, in ways that are organic, living, and reflexive. Form thus becomes the result of this reflexivity, and not the result of an imposed style.

There is an important parallel to be drawn between how the advancements of engineering enabled architecture to become more organic, and how contemporary engineers of information sharing permit journalism to become grounded in organic necessity. Engineering advancements of the industrial revolution presented new ways of manipulating space, and Le Corbusier called for architects to rethink how they turn space into place. If journalism is to be understood as the contemporary practice of turning an event into a story, then on-going technological advancements afford new ways of letting information shape storytelling, and present new spaces that become the contemporary places of storytelling.

In this essay, I synthesize previous and on-going research to describe these new places of news storytelling, and the form that storytelling takes on as news audiences find their own place in it. I understand place as a particular location that bears significance for human agents, assembled and attained relationally, but also reflective of power structures and allowing potential for agency (Massey 1994; Couldry 2000). Attaining, and asserting one’s own place in a developing news story is effected through a variety of practices that blend news co-creation with the social practices of news sharing. Telling stories, about ourselves and others, has always formed the core of our socializing habitus. Telling, sharing, and commenting on news stories has its own place within this socializing infrastructure, and new(er) technologies expand our storytelling repertoire. Ultimately, telling a story represents an attempt to present one’s own perspective on a particular course of events, and to thus frame how things happened. It represents an act of agency, although the extent to which this act grants the individual greater autonomy, and by consequence, power, depends on socio-cultural context and storytelling fluency. Socio-cultural context evolves an assemblage of components that set the stage for storytelling, inclusive of the affordances of technologies, which are always historically specific. Fluency derives from the ability of the individual to manipulate not just the affordances of technologies, but the greater socio-cultural context within which those are utilized. Storytelling becomes an exercise in power; one with uncertain outcomes but exciting potential.

Because all, and especially new(er) media, become meaningful to the extent that they enable our own autonomy across time and space, I begin by describing what the new places of storytelling look like. For journalism studies, this permits us to understand how audiences employ news storytelling to develop their own takes on what makes a news story, and what counts as journalism. But audiences do not engage in practices of co-creation from the conventional spaces of news production and consumption. They tell stories from the spaces and places of their everyday lives, and tell them in ways that further infuse these spaces with meaning.

People navigate and organize these spaces so as to preserve storytelling autonomy, and tell stories as they traverse boundaries public and private, mobile and local. The affordances of technologies further remediate space and enhance, or discourage, particular narrative tendencies. In telling their own stories and engaging in meaning making practices, storytelling audiences deconstruct and reconstruct storytelling conventions that blend the traditions of a primary and secondary orality. I trace how the form of these stories is grounded in affective gestures, invited by the platforms and re-appropriated by users to infuse stories with subjectivity, thus producing a historically specific variety of affective news streams. The liminality inherent in these practices permits citizens to make space for their own place in the story, and potentially lay claim to how these stories combine to form histories.

**The New Places of News Storytelling**

Research indicates that information sharing and conversational uses of online media by journalists, news organizations, and individual users render complex and networked social awareness systems that evolve beyond traditional ecologies of journalism. The practices populating these evolving ecologies blend the production and consumption of news storytelling and have been describe as *produsage.* Prodused feeds of storytelling emerge out of user-led collaborative content creation, driven by citizens and journalists using networked media in ways that challenge the traditional dichotomies of production and consumption (Bruns 2008). The term is meant to describe, in a theoretically relevant manner, a set of practices that typically develop organically, as people share, forward, and comment on the news. While the resulting patterns of news sharing challenge our existing hierarchies of news production, consumption and distribution, it is questionable whether people themselves consciously and constantly perceive themselves as *produsers* within the context of their everyday normality*.* The term serves as a reminder that the tenuous distinction between producers and consumers of content has faded, and thus underlines the hybrid nature of production and consumption. What is of most interest, as *produsage* lends form to developing news stories, is the extent to which the resulting and remediated places and spaces of news audiences evolve organically out of the everyday rhythms of sociality.

Through these patterns of communication, hybridity is introduced into the news system, by further blurring boundaries between information, news, and entertainment and by creating “subtle, but important shifts in the balance of power in shaping news production” (Chadwick 2011, 6). Furthermore, the “broad, asynchronous, light-weight and always-on” aspect of networked platforms afford individuals “an awareness system [with] diverse means to collect, communicate, share and display news and information, serving diverse purposes . . . on different levels of engagement (Hermida 2010, 301). Homophily frequently shapes information flows across and within platforms, meaning that like-minded actors tend to listen to like-minded others, frequently inducing what has been described as an echo-chamber effect.1 At the same time, these articulated opinion silos frequently permit the expression of under-represented or marginalized points of view. Thus, homophily and intraelite competition present dominant features within these developing systems, without at the same time excluding motivated and strategically oriented actors from influencing the resulting agenda of issues (Chadwick 2011). As a result, these platforms pluralize storytelling and may *presence* voices that are not readily visible through the conventional architectures of broadcasting and journalism (Couldry 2012). Thus the new networked spaces of storytelling afforded via online platforms may be understood as *prodused, hybrid,* and *ambient.*

The places constructed as individual users infuse these practices with subjective meaning can be better understood by applying the concept of mobile privatization. Williams (1974) introduced the concept of mobile privatization to describe the ways in which mass media allow mobility to be pursued from the privacy of one’s home, thus enabling the witnessing from home and live, via television, events taking place at a different location. The concept was redeployed by Spigel (1994; 2001), who explained how television introduces elements of mobility in domestic spaces, thus enabling both a retreat to suburbia and a newer form of media-centered community. Du Gay et al. (1997) evoked the concept of mobile privatization to understand the ways in which a social technology, like the Walkman, permits individuals to manage public and private boundaries, while at the same time communicating in a variety of symbolic contexts. Hay (2003) re-deployed the concept as privatized mobility, to examine the domestic sphere as a sphere of self-governance, organized through multiple technologies.

Both concepts of mobile privatization and privatized mobility have been employed to describe how people use mobile technologies to traverse public and private spaces and attain autonomy in how they connect with others and express themselves (Papacharissi 2010). They are meaningful because they help describe how the affordances of technologies change both the scale and experience of space while at the same time reproducing a degree of familiarity that permits audiences to somehow claim (their own) place. The concept captures the tendencies and tensions of technologies that afford expression and connection across spheres public and/or private. It explains how audiences access and utilize storytelling practices, in ways that afford them locational, and potentially storytelling, autonomy. For audience storytellers, mobile connectivity recalibrates the social spaces of everyday life, utilized to both read and tell stories about the news (e.g., Peters 2012). News produsage practices, in an age of mobile media, locate humans at the center of journalistically informed storytelling, and are driven by customizing and repurposing of information (Westlund 2013). Technologies that afford mobility, private and privatized, permit both journalists and citizens to produse stories that attain geo-social relevance; they utilize mobility to both emphasize a users’ location but to also afford a “sense of place,” which “helps to conceptualise individuals’ physical, psychological and/or social connections to particular geographic territory without necessarily locating them within these physical spaces” (Hess 2013, 49). Technologies of mobility thus provide both locative and storytelling autonomy, situating the narrator locally and permitting connection beyond locality. They enable storytellers to mark stories with their own boundaries and break those boundaries at the same time, by providing socially informed connectivity (Hess 2013). The places of ambient, hybrid, and prodused news storytelling are public and private, mobile and geo-social, actual and imagined. A reasonable question that thus emerges is, if place is everywhere and boundless, is it still place or does it lose specificity? I argue that it is, but that the specificity derives from the ability the infuse place with one’s own subjectivity. People have always told stories as a way of both affirming their place in time and defining what this place is. New(er) technologies further enhance our storytelling abilities by presenting space as boundless and providing us with means to make it specific. In the next few paragraphs, I explain how this occurs within the context of news production, sharing, and consumption.

**Liminality, News, and Subjectivity**

On a first level, online networked platforms render ambient, always-on spaces where hybrid forms of news produsage takes place. These spaces are frequently facilitated by processes of mobile privatization (Williams 1974; 1983), and more recently, privatized mobility (Hay 2003; Papacharissi 2010), through technologies that afford users (mobile) autonomy in choosing how and where from they connect to the rest of the world. On a secondary level, these spaces facilitate social conversations that produce user-generated arguments on what is news, or how a particular story might take the shape of news. For example, research and anecdotal evidence suggest that platforms like Twitter, Reddit, and a variety of blog and microblog services sustain collaborative storytelling, co-creation, and curation of news content (Schonfield 2010). These pluralized and collectively prodused news feeds, generated by citizens committing independent or coordinated acts of journalism, present an important alternative to the dominant news economy (Bruns and Highfield 2012). Social news climates like Reddit, Digg, and Twitter, in particular, generate collective news intelligence through a blend of social practices that include voting, filtering, and commenting on news (Meraz 2012). They generate news streams that blend cursory references to news with deeply personal and mostly affective reactions to how this news is covered. Resulting news streams are generated through socially infused conventions that enable engagement through broadcasting, but also through a variety of practices that derived out of how people pay attention, or “listen” to the news (Crawford 2009). These practices frequently involve gestures that we may understand as phatic. Nodding along online may be expressed as “digging” a preferred news item, pointing to an item of interest may involve retweeting an article or opinion of interest, so as to expose it others, and like presents a form of affective attunement that is frequently expressed in interpersonal conversation with no more than a smile. Phatic practices that drive interpersonal conversations are weaved into and remediated through the affordances of the socially-mediated news platforms. As a result, sociality drives phatic practices of broadcasting and listening to the news. News storytelling becomes increasingly dynamic and constantly evolving, driven by on-going conversations that turn events into evolving news stories.

Crises, breaking news situations, and in general, instances when news changes too quickly for mainstream media to develop a coherent and fully-sourced narrative, bring ambient, always-on news platforms to the fore of news reporting. Different ways of covering crises and emergent events evolve out of different feelings associated with space, and different ways for making meaning out of space, thus turning into place. A variety of approaches to objectivity in news coverage emphasize distance, whereas practices like embedding are meant to infuse reporting with more of a sense of place. News streams generated by users reporting and conversing about what is happening blend various perspectives on space and place and in doing so, frequently emerge as the primary alternative for information sharing and news dissemination (Papacharissi 2010; Howard 2011). Platforms like Twitter may be used to break news but to also monitor and edit rumours that are reported as fact (e.g., Jewitt 2009; Vis 2013). Furthermore, in situations where access to media is controlled, restricted, or otherwise not trusted, these platforms permit citizens to bypass traditional news gatekeepers and radically pluralize the news generation and dissemination process, through engaging in electronic word-of-mouth news sharing (e.g., Dahlberg 2009; Jansen et al. 2009). During times of conflict, the ability to broadcast, listen in on, and edit word-of-mouth news on these platforms affords a powerful way for individuals to articulate voice and presence concerns typically marginalized. Thus, individuals are able to change the dynamics of conflict coverage and shape how events are covered, and possibly, how history is written (Hamdy 2010). For example, research on the Egyptian uprisings of 2011 that led to the resignation of Hosni Mubarak has indicated that Twitter supported information flows that were networked, enabled connections with diasporic publics, and sustained engagement reflexively (Lotan et al. 2011; Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012). Furthermore, social media in current and past uprisings in Egypt afforded visibility to marginalized voices and enabled alternative narratives of dissention (Hamdy and Gomaa 2012; Lim 2012). During ongoing Occupy and Los Indignados demonstrations, news streams generated by citizens participating and monitoring the movements sustained ambient conversations containing a mix of news updates, opinions, and other socially relevant information (Burns 2010; Hermida 2010)

It goes without saying that each event produces its own news stream, and this stream will vary depending on the medium used to propagate this stream. Collaboratively generated news streams through social media platforms produce unique digital footprints of the movements, conflicts, or events they pertain to. But they tend to be characterized by a unique mix of broadcasting conventions and interpersonal conversation tendencies. These tendencies blend print storytelling practices, described by Ong (1982) as a secondary orality, with the traditions of oral forms of storytelling, understood as a primary orality. The resulting streams blend news facts with the drama of interpersonal conversation, and combine news reports with emotionally filled and opinionated reactions to the news in a manner that makes it difficult to discern news from conversation about the news, and doing so misses the point. Tweets recurring on #egypt reflected the need for people to get their own story, in their own words, out (e.g., Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012). The streams generated by people contributing to #egypt or #ows were not meant to function as a substitute, nor as a complement to news provided by more conventional broadcast channels, even though they frequently did. They were *prodused* as collaboratively generated news stories, on parwith news stories reported on CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera, and a variety of other news outlets. They do not replace or fill out, but rather, reconcile, the more deliberate and self-conscious storytelling invited by print and electronic media with the additive and participatory nature of oral storytelling practices, producing a form of orality we may understand as digital. The *liminality* inherent in these streams, which occupy the in-between space rendered as primary and secondary oralities meet, renders them ambiguous, which means that they contain both empowering and disempowering potential for those participating in them.

**Liminality and Locating One’s Own Place in Storytelling**

Liminality refers to events, processes, or individuals that are pertaining to the threshold of or an initial stage of a process. The anthropologist Victor Turner drew from the work of Arnold Van Gennep (1909) on rites of passage, to present a theory of liminality, meant to describe stages of transition and in-between positions that liminal individuals occupy. Turner understood liminality as a position of social and structural ambiguity, or as “the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (1967, 97). A group of liminal actors is characterized by a lack of social markers and an in-between stage of social heterarchy that renders all actors equal, for the time being. Users participating in news gathering, listening, and disseminating processes are engaged in this process from a liminal point of access. Liminality is a middle point in a dialogue about what is news, in a society. It is a transitional, but essential stage in finding one’s own place in the story, and doing so from a position that allows autonomy and potential for agency. In order for this dialogue to be rendered liminal, all previous hierarchy about what makes news must be abandoned, and therein lies the empowering potential of liminality. At the same time, the very function of liminality is to abandon structure so as to permit activity that will result in the birthing of a new structure, and therein lie both potential empowerment and disepowerment. Turner (1974, 225) understands “liminality as a phase in social life in which this confrontation between ‘activity which has no structure’ and its ‘structured results’ produces in men their highest pitch of self-consciousness.”

Individuals participating in liminal forms of news storytelling engage in a variety of practices that both reproduce and forget past conventions of news production and consumption. I describe these stages of collaborative news co-creation as liminal because engagement relies on the temporary dismantling of news rituals so as to be able to collectively (re)produce new ones. It is easy to read these as processes of news production. But they are primarily about utilizing tools of news production and consumption to find ones’ own place in the story (Robinson 2009). Liminality affords the opportunity for actors engaging and making meaning out of the story to approach the event on equal footing, and to feel their own place in the story. Engaged in various stages of *produsage,* storytelling audiences occupy a liminal space; a space of transition, as they contribute to turning an event into a story. But liminality is a temporary state, defined as the midpoint between beginning and end. It is set into motion as an initiated action attempts to undo social structures or conventions and ends as the initiated action is (re)integrated into social structure. The ambient, hybrid, and prodused practices of liking, retweeting, liveblogging, endorsing, and opining frequently blended into social reactions to news events are also liminal. They present personal and temporary content injections that play their own in part in turning a news event into a story. As such, they are inspired by the potential of what the prodused story might look like, however temporary the lasting effect of these subjective content interpolations may be. In the next few paragraphs, I explain how their form is affective.

**Affect, Mediality and Discursive Spaces**

Affective gestures are richly afforded by social media and present a first and primal step in meaning making practices. Affect, or affection as used by Spinoza, is not to be confused with personal sentiment, although it may be inclusive of it. Affect refers “to the ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987/1980, xvi). Emotion is subsumed within affect, and perhaps the most intense part of affect. Yet affect itself extends beyond feeling, as a general way of sense making, that is inclusive of potentialities and

regimes of expressivity … tied to resonant wordings and diffusions of feelings/passions—often including atmospheres of sociality, crowd behaviours, contagions of feeling, matters of belonging … and a range of postcolonial, hybridized, and migrant voices that forcefully question the privilege and stability of individualized actants possessing self-derived agency and solely private emotions within a scene or environment (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 8).

Listening to, editing, rebroadcasting, reacting, or remixing electronic word-of-mouth news present affective gestures directed at shifting the shape of news content, so as to infuse it with it the potential of subjectivity.

Affect is characterized by intensity, although the emotional root of that intensity will vary (Massumi 2002). As it is released through interaction, it marks forces and non-forces of encounter, belonging and non-belonging, in-between-ness and “accumulative beside-ness” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010). Because of its *not yet* element (Spinoza, in Seigworth and Gregg 2010), affect contains anticipation, promise, hope, and potential, or, what Seigworth and Gregg term “an inventory of shimmers” (9). In this sense, this liminality renders individuals powerful, and potentially powerless at the same time. The potentiality imparted through affective flows is communicative of affect’s futurity. Affect is habitually rhythmic, via the connected assemblages of habituated interpretations and practices. Yet it is also performatively evocative of would-be reactions, which become a “bridge of not yet, to the next” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 14). Affect is performed, enacted via many sites, fluid and always in motion, and defined by its own variation (Massumi 2002). Affective processes may breathe new meaning into the texture of a performance, frequently through linguistic play or reversal of norms (Sedgwick 2003). It is through the interaction with further bodies, thoughts, and ideas that affect promises additional interpretive layers, thus suggesting potential actions. Thus, affect is frequently evoked in aesthetics, as it is more a matter of *manner* than of essence, of how, rather than what affects or is affected, thus lending itself to performativity (Seigworth and Gregg 2010). For online networked platforms, subtle remixing, rebroadcasting and sharing of content may produce affective gestures of potentially powerful symbolic impact. A recent Human Rights campaign prompted thousands of Facebook pages to “turn red,” replacing profile pictures with a red equal sign in support of marriage equality. This affective gesture, materialized through the sharing, remixing, and rebroadcasting of a simple image produced a simple message, rich in intensity.

**Affective News Streams**

Affect refers to emotion that is subjectively experienced, and has been connected to processes of premediation, enabled by newer media, that frequently anticipate news or events prior to their occurrence (Grusin 2010). Premediation involves a variety of affective gestures or expressions, made in anticipation of an event. These anticipatory gestures afford emotive expression but also inform the shape an event will take, and of course are further shaped by ongoing events. Such anticipatory gestures are rendered by audiences, publics, governments, and the media, and characterize how we experience global public events. The concepts of mediality, affectivity, and premediation characterize the flow of information across networked mediated systems, and permit us to understand governmental and social agency in a more complex way, inclusive of the role of emotion in colouring public dispositions.

I employ affect theory to define *affective news streams* as news collaboratively constructed out of subjective experience, opinion, and emotion all sustained by and sustaining ambient news environments. We may understand affective news as the product of hybrid news values and ambient, always-on news environments. Affective news streams blend fact, opinion, and sentiment to the point where discerning one from the other is difficult, and doing so misses the point. Characterized by premediation, affective news streams may be filled with anticipatory gestures that are not predictive of the future, but communicate a predisposition to frame it, and in doing so, lay claim to latent forms of agency that are also affective and networked. If we understand affective news streams not just as informative, but as collectively-generated, pluralistic arguments on what should be news, and how news stories should be told, we may interpret affective news gestures as indicative of political statements of dissent with a mainstream news culture, and the agendas that culture cultivates. More importantly, the infusion of affect into news marks the return of affect to the paradigm of news neutrality, which often leaves citizens cynical about news and wanting more. But it also provides a way of turning affective statements of disagreement into atomized political gestures that can be networked, to piece together a contemporary understanding of the political**.** In this manner, affective news streams discursively render spaces where the long-disconnected publics of citizens and journalists may reconnect.

Affect drives a variety of news broadcasting and storytelling practices that infuse news reporting with intensity, thus producing affective news. For example, the breaking news ticker, now ubiquitous in TV news, is filled with intensity, expressed in anticipation of events that are in the process of happening. Its form is premediated, as it is employed to report on an event that is unfolding and has not yet been developed into news story (Grusin 2010). News reports offered by journalists and news anchors may similarly convey a sense of intensity, especially when providing information on events constantly evolving, such as crises and emergencies, but also weather or sports updates. Affective news frequently populate greater narratives of suspense and curiosity, and enjoyment derived from them is often independent of the factuality of the information consumed (Knobloch et al. 2004).

Affective news streams, on the other hand, emerge out of collaboratively generated flows of information, rendered as citizens and journalists are experiencing, observing, and reporting on events in the making. They are driven by intensity and not factuality, instantaneity and not graduality. Thus, they may often be inaccurate, because they are liminal, provided we understand accuracy as structure and liminality as the transitory path to attaining accuracy. For example, in the recent Boston marathon bombings, a variety of affective news streams generated through different platforms, including Reddit and Twitter, contained numerous reports of inaccurate information, combined with general reactions to the events, how they were being reported, and what they may have been brought on by. Read as news, these streams are factually inaccurate. Read as affective news streams, these present liminal paths to accuracy.

Because affective news streams are rendered out of subjective interpolations into a story developing about an event, they are reflective of intensity accumulated in reaction to a multitude of events, and this intensity presents their distinguishing feature. For example, affective news streams dominated the flow of news information on #egypt, as news, opinions, and reactions to the uprisings that led to the resignation of Hosni Mubarak were broadcast through the platform of Twitter (Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012). Intensity and ambience characterized the news streams generated by tags associated with the Occupy movement on Twitter, even though they did not always produce coherent and harmonious news narratives (Meraz and Papacharissi 2013). During the 2012 US Presidential Elections, online publics were discursively rendered on Twitter, in response to statements made by the presidential candidates during the debates. Tags including #bindersfullofwomen, or #firebigbird served to organically curate affectively infused streams containing a mix of opinion, news, and general sentiment in response to issues discussed in the debates. These themes were further reproduced, remixed, and rebroadcast through other platforms, including Tumblr and a variety of meme generators, which geo-socially blended atomized takes on the news with broader and pluralized streams containing news and a variety of socially relevant information. Similarly, the hashtag #muslimrage visibly challenged a Newsweek magazine cover featuring the same headline, through propagating playful tweets meant to deconstruct popular stereotypes about Muslims presented in mainstream media. While #muslimrage did not contain any new news, it articulated organically populated disagreement with a dominant news frame presented in the news.

Affective news streams are characterized by instantaneity. They will contain news of the moment, subjectively determined, although this may not always present new news. News streams like #muslimrage are discursively rendered in vernaculars that are phatic and emotive, reflecting intensity of interest. Even though they may be driven by curiosity around an event, they do not necessarily procure accurate information about it, because of their liminal nature. They are generated as personal takes on what happened, might have happened, will happen and what it means accumulate, and as such, they are characterized by futurity, sociality, and reside in the realm of the potential. The shape news takes on through these streams tends to be *affective,* the form of news storytelling *hybrid,* and the spaces rendered discursively through news storytelling frequently function as *electronic elsewheres,* or social spaces that support liminal viewpoints (Yang 2009; Berry, Kim, and Spigel 2010). Following this logic, media are not just the means for representing places that already exist, but rather, actually become the means for shaping space and producing places, which may include home, community, work, and play (Berry et al. 2010). The resulting geo-social, hybrid, and mediated environments can be understood as *elsewheres* that presence alternative viewpoints, voices, and stories. For citizens, the liminal form of space is crucial, as it permits them to access content in transition and find their own place in the story, alongside journalists, who already possess an institutionally assigned place in the story.

**Digital Oralities and Literacies**

In emerging traditions of journalisms, both journalists and citizens are afforded a unique place in *the story,* and news storytelling in general. News feeds collectively generated by citizens, bloggers, activists, journalists, and media outlets are premised on produsage and expose temporal and other incompatibilities between live blogging the news and reporting.  Blogging and micro-blogging platforms, along with other convergent networked platforms, afford journalists neither the time to process information, nor the privilege of being the first to report it. These temporal incompatibilities are not insurmountable, and are also not entirely new, but they require acknowledging the presence of not just one, but several different paradigms of news reporting and journalism. Alternatively, we may understand these as liminal layers to a story.

News storytelling assembled through a variety of collectively-operated, pluralized platforms implies a level of agency that is networked, complex, and diffused. In order to tell a story, the storyteller must make concrete decisions about how events will be presented. These decisions are collaboratively and organically made through practices of repetition and redaction that do not always produse a coherent narrative, but rather, result in parallel narratives, possessing variable levels of coherence and continuity, distinguished by their own affective imprint. For example, news streams generated through #egypt and #Jan25 effectively framed a movement as a revolution, well before it had resulted in regime reversal (e.g., Meraz and Papacharissi 2013). The more recent events of regime upheaval that occurred in Egypt during the summer of 2013 revealed the distance between the story of a revolution in the making told through social media and the limitations of regime reform that ensued. By contrast, news feeds collaboratively formed out of contributions to #ows did not affectively boost a revolution, nor did they induce regime reform. But their purpose was to provide opportunity for people to stand and be counted in disagreement with certain course of events that led to a deep economic depression, and the digital imprint sustained by #ows fulfilled this purpose. These digital imprints, rendered as people take part in reporting and commenting on the news, form first drafts of news stories in the making.

It is often remarked that journalism presents a first rough draft of history (Graham, as quoted in Shafer 2010), and that thus, we may think of online networked platforms like Twitter as rendering a first draft of journalism (Stahl 2013). New journalisms evolve out of new places of storytelling that blend news production and consumption to produce narratives that are reflexive. Liminal spaces are where journalists and citizens meet, to collectively shape a story.

Through these processes of collaborative storytelling, claims to agency are discursive, crowdsourced to prominence, networked, and sometimes ephemeral, enabling a variety of actors to tell stories in ways that mix the conventions of news broadcasting with the phatic practices of interpersonal conversation. Drawing from Ong’s work (1982), we may begin to interpret the orality that drives this form of storytelling as digital, derivative of the blended conventions of both a primary and secondary orality. Ong (1995) distinguished between the fluidity, spontaneity and reflexivity inherent in oral storytelling traditions, and the deliberate spontaneity of a writing and print culture, pointing to the ways in which electronic and computer-mediated texts accompany secondary orality with a secondary visualism. He explained that within a primary orality, the nature of the word is not visible but lives in the world of sound. Thus storytelling “comes into being in the present even though it normally may derive variously from a tradition, a past,” and evolves as the voice of storytelling changes (Ong 1995, 1). By contrast, the logic of a secondary orality may mute out the voice, in favour of generating “technologized”, “permanent”, and thus “silent” stories that distance (Ong 1995, 2). We encounter this form of distance in the paradigm of journalistic objectivity, which requires narrators to establish objective distance from the story so as to ascertain accuracy, and thus electronically reproduce and share verified information. This distance is eliminated in the subjective form of oral storytelling, however, which affectively evolves as it circulates in the oral tradition. I suggest that online networked platforms blend interpersonal and mass storytelling practice variably, offering a reconciliation of primary and secondary orality tendencies and tensions. Where secondary orality ensured distance, digital orality affirms voice, offering a digitally enabled path into the story. Where primary orality emphasized voice, digital orality propagates voices while preserving their atomized subjectivity. A digital orality is assembled around broadcasting voice, atomized and pluralized. Affective news streams are the product of a digital orality, shaped by storytelling practices meant to give extemporaneous narrators voice and visibility within the evolving story.

**NOTES**

For more on homophily, see: Lazarsfeld, Paul F. and Robert K. Merton. 1954. “Friendship as a Social Process: A Substantive and Methodological Analysis,” In *Freedom and Control in Modern Society,* edited by Morroe Berger, Theodore Abel, and Charles H. Page, 18-66. New York: Van Nostrand, or McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook . 2001. “[Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks,](http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.415)” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 415–444. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.415. For a more focused analysis on how homophily drives information sharing, structures of influence, and behavioural contagion or information cascades, see for example Aral, Sinan, Lev Muchnik, and Arun Sundararajan. 2009. “Distinguishing Influence-Based Contagion from Homophily-Driven Diffusion in Dynamic Networks”. *PNAS,* 106: 21544–21549, or Watts, Duncan J. 2002. “A Simple Model of Global Cascades on Random Networks. *PNAS,* 99: 5766–5771.

**REFERENCES**

Berry, Chris, So-yong Kim, and Lynn Spigel. 2010. *Electronic Elswheres: Media Technology and the Experience of Social Space.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bruns, Axel. 2008. *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond. From Production to Produsage*. New York: Peter Lang.

Bruns, Axel and Tim Highfield. 2012. “[Blogs, Twitter, and Breaking News: The Produsage of Citizen Journalism”.](http://snurb.info/files/2012/Blogs%2C%20Twitter%2C%20and%20Breaking%20News.pdf) In [*Produsing Theory in a Digital World: The Intersection of Audiences and Production*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1433115190/ref%3Das_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1433115190&linkCode=as2&tag=snurbaxelbrun-20)**, edited by Rebecca Ann Lind,15-32. New York: Peter Lang.

Burns, Alex. 2010. “Oblique Strategies for Ambient Journalism.” *M/C Journal* 13 (2): <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/230>.

Chadwick, Andrew. 2011. “The Political Information Cycle in a Hybrid News System: The British Prime Minister and the ‘Bullygate’ Affair.” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16 (1): 3–29. doi:10.1177/1940161210384730.

Couldry, Nick. 2000. *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age*. London: Routledge.

Couldry, Nick. 2012*. Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice.* Cambridge: Polity.

Crawford, Kate. 2009. “Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media.” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23 (4): 525-535. doi: 10.1080/10304310903003270.

Dahlberg, Lincoln. 2009. “Libertarian Cyber-utopianism and Globalization.” In *Utopia and Globalization,* edited by Patrick Hayden and Chamsy el-Ojeili, 176–189. London: Palgrave.

Deleuze, Gillies and Felix Guattari. 1987/1980. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated and foreword by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnessota Press.

du Gay, Paul, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus. 1997. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage.

Grusin, Richard. 2010. *Premediation: Affect and Mediality After 9/11.* London and New York: Palgrave.

Hamdy, Naila. 2010. “Arab Media Adopt Citizen Journalism to Change the Dynamics of Conflict Coverage.” *Global Media Journal: Arabian Edition* 1 (1): 3-15

Hamdy, Naila and Ehab H. Gomaa. 2012. “Framing the Egyptian Uprising in Arabic Language Newspapers and Social Media.” *Journal of Communication* 62(2): 195-211. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01637.x

Hay, James. 2003. “Unaided Virtues: The (Neo-)Liberalization of the Domestic Sphere and the New Architecture of Community.” In *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality,* edited by Jack Bratich, Jeremy Packer and Cameron McCarthy, 165–206. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hermida, Alfred. 2010. “Twittering the News.” *Journalism Practice* 4 (3): 297–308. doi:10.1080/17512781003640703.

Hess, Kristy. 2013. “Breaking Boundaries.” *Digital Journalism* 1 (1): 48-63. doi:10.1080/21670811.2012.714933.

Howard, Phillip. 2011. *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Poltical Islam.* London: Oxford University Press.

Jansen, Bernard J., Mimi Zhang, Kate Sobel, and Abdur Chowdhury. 2009. “Twitter Power: Tweets as Electronic Word of Mouth.” *Journal of American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 60 (11): 2169-2188. doi:10.1002/asi.v60:11.

Jewitt, Robert. 2009. “Commentaries: The Trouble with Twittering: Integrating Social Media into Mainstream News.” *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 5(3): 233–246. doi:10.1386/macp.5.3.233\_3.

Knobloch, Silvia, Grit Patzig, Anna-Maria Mende, and Matthias Hastall. 2004. “Affective News: Effects of Discourse Structure in Narratives on Suspense, Curiosity, and Enjoyment While Reading News and Novels.” *Communication Research,* 31 (3):259-287*.* doi:10.1177/0093650203261517.

Le Corbusier. 1931. *Towards a New Architecture*. New York: Dover.

Lim, Merlyna. 2012. "Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses: Social Media and Ooppositional Movements in Egypt 2004–2011." *Journal of Communication* 62 (2): 231-248. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01628.x.

Lotan, Gilad, Erhardt Graeff, Mike Ananny, Devin Gaffney, Ian Pearce, and Danah Boyd. 2011. “The Revolutions Were Tweeted: Information Flows During the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions.” *International Journal of Communication* 5: 1375-1405.

Massey, Doreen. 1994. *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity.

Massumi, Brian. 2002. *Parable for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Meraz, Sharon. 2012. “The Sociality of News Sociology: Examining User Participation and News Selection Practices in Social Media News Sites. In *News With a View: Essays on the Eclipse of Objectivity in Modern Journalism* edited by Burton Saint John III & Kristen Johnson, 78–96. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Meraz, Sharon, and Zizi Papacharissi. 2013 "Networked Gatekeeping and Networked Framing on #Egypt." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18 (2): 138-166. doi: 10.1177/1940161212474472.

Ong, Walter. 1982. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Ong, Walter. 1995. Secondary Orality and Secondary Visualism. Walter J. Ong Manuscript Collection University Archives. Pius XII Memorial Library. Saint Louis University. St. Louis, MO.

Papacharissi, Zizi and Maria de Fatima Oliveira. 2012. “Affective News and Networked Publics: The Rhythms of News Storytelling on #egypt.” *Journal of Communication* 62 (2): 266–82. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466/2012.01630.x

Papacharissi, Zizi. 2010. *A Private Sphere*. Cambridge: Polity

Peters, Chris. 2012. “Journalism to Go: The Changing Spaces of News Consumption.” *Journalism Studies* 13 (5-6): 695-705. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2012.662405

Robinson, Sue. 2009. “‘Searching for My Own Unique Place in the Story’: A Comparison of Journalistic and Citizen-Produced Coverage of Hurricane Katrina’s Anniversary. In *Journalism and Citizenship: New Agendas in Communication* edited by Zizi Papacharissi, 166–88. New York: Routledge.

Schonfield, Erick. 2010. “Costolo: Twitter now has 190 million users tweeting 65 million times a day.” *TechCrunch*, July 8. <http://techcrunch.com/2010/06/08/twitter-190-million-users/>

Sedgwick, Eve K. 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Seigworth, Gregory and Melissa Gregg. 2010. *The Affect Theory Reader.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Shafer, Jack. 2010. “Who Said it First: Journalism is the “First Rough Draft of History.”” *Slate,* August 30. http://www.slate.com/articles/news\_and\_politics/press\_box/2010/08/who\_said\_it\_first.html.

## Spigel, Lynn. 1994. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Spigel, Lynn. 2001. *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*. Durham: Duke University Press.

## Stahl, Jeremy. 2013. “Thou Shalt Not Stoop to Political Point Scoring.” *Slate,* April 13.http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/04/boston\_marathon\_bombing\_all\_the\_mistakes\_journalists\_make\_during\_a\_crisis.html.

Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Turner, Victor. 1974. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Vis, Farida. 2013. “Twitter as a Reporting Tool for Breaking News.” *Digital Journalism* 1 (1): 27-47. doi: 10.1080/21670811.2012.741316.

Westlund, Oscar. 2013. "Mobile News: A Review and Model of Journalism in an Age of Mobile Media." *Digital Journalism* 1 (1): 6-26. doi:10.1080/21670811.2012.740273.

## Williams, Raymond. 1974. *Television, Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Routledge.

## Williams, Raymond. 1983. *Towards 2000.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Yang, Guobin. 2009. *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online.* New York: Columbia University Press.