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A reply to the replies – Counterplea by Jake Lynch

David Loyn is right to say that his and my journalistic desiderata would substantially overlap. I have commented that his own reporting could, in many cases, be called peace journalism. He suggests, instead, that the "key difference" between us is that "it was not [his] *intention* to commit Peace Journalism" (2007: 4; emphasis in the original). Boiled down, then, his objections can be seen to rest on an intentionalist fallacy. I reckon peace journalism is better understood as a response to a condition we inhabit.

Consider - few of us, indeed, would set out to 'commit' post-modernism, when deciding to wear 'classic' clothing or listen to 'retro' music, but, in so doing, we are preferring referentiality to originality – a response to the post-modern condition, finding ourselves surrounded by a deep stack of archived narratives and images, endlessly reproduced and disseminated.

It means our lived experience of meaning-making is highly textual, or inter-textual. *The Da Vinci Code*, for instance, appeals to us because it resonates with this experience, by blurring the boundaries of fact and fiction, and by drawing our attention to competing narratives and inconvenient details, which, once retrieved from the margins, threaten to unravel the whole. It plays with modes of reading familiar to us from many contexts; modes we would recognise, in the writings of Jacques Derrida, as deconstruction. While the world's beaches, in 2004, were knee-deep in copies of Dan Brown's best-seller, however, I have yet to see *Of Grammatology* propped open on a deckchair.

Peace journalism became thinkable in the previous condition, the one we look back on as late modernity, with its key critical discourse of structuralism – the insight that, when we observe and represent the outside world, the patterns we discern are structured by the conventions we apply – even if, once again, most of us are unaware of it. Thomas Kuhn published *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962; the English translation of *Structural Anthropology*, by Claude Levi-Strauss, appeared in 1963 and the *Journal of Peace Research* featured Galtung and Ruge's 'Structure of Foreign News' in 1965.

The acts of observation and representation – the work journalists do – had effectively been problematised. Research on the news, in the fields of Communication and Peace and Conflict Studies, became dominated by identification and discussion, based on such methods as content analysis and subject interviews, of conventions operating on the selection of stories, sourcing, narrative structure and so on.

Later, the concept of representation was itself further opened up – 'decentred', to use an idiom from the new critical discourse of post-structuralism – by reception theory, a contribution from exponents of Cultural Studies, notably Stuart Hall (1980). Journalists both 'decode' texts and images, in Hall's words, and 're-encode' them. Editors and reporters may produce negotiated, or even oppositional readings - of corporate press releases, say, or war propaganda. The tension at the centre of journalistic work is between such readings and the effect of conventions governing what can be said, by whom, how, where and when.

The debate over peace journalism picks up on a pervasive sense of paradigm shift, that these conventions have been exposed – the tide of critical awareness has risen high enough to float them off what I have called "sedimented layers of tradition, assumption and definition" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: *xxi*) and break them loose from their moorings.

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Alignment and after

The gravitational pull behind the tide – to continue the metaphor – is coming from equal or greater shifts in social, political and economic conditions, shifts underway at least since the end of the Cold War.

How come? News has traditionally been aligned with nation. The commodification of news, enabled by the invention of the rotary printing press in 1843, both accompanied and reinforced the construction of imagined communities. "Print-language is what invents nationalism", in Anderson's words (1991: 134). News about conflict is, traditionally, organised around this alignment to a greater extent than any other – hence the old US newspaper maxim, "One dead American equals 10 dead Israelis equals 100 dead Russians equals 1,000 dead Africans" (Steyn, 2004).

The Cold War held this alignment in place, within the context of larger alignments. As late as 1995, a newsflow study of 44 countries found the United States far and away the biggest focus of international news, with France, the UK, Russia and China trailing in its wake (Wu, 2004: 107). The fact that Rwanda registers nowhere in this study – based, as it was, on data collected within a year of the catastrophic genocide that left up to a million dead – is as good a starting point as any to consider the larger context within which journalistic conventions for the reporting of conflict have come under such sustained scrutiny and criticism.

In brief – Rwanda came to represent a failure of global governance, since the head of the UN military mission there, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, passed on explicit warnings about the bloodshed to come, months in advance, with an application for a modest number of reinforcements to forestall widescale violence. The reaction? His pleas were rejected, the mission drawn down and Rwandans abandoned to their fate.

The Canadian government convened the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, whose final report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, enshrined the concept of 'humanitarian intervention', up to and including military action, to protect human rights. It quickly became the orthodox view. The head of the UN Department of Peacekeeping at the time of the Rwandan genocide, Kofi Annan, had by now become Secretary-General, and his millennium report, *We the Peoples*, heralded "a more human-centred approach to security as *opposed to* the traditional state-centred approach" (my italics) (UN, 2000).

In other words, human rights – a definitively internationalist concept, belonging to all nations and none – was now to be the paramount analytical factor in international assessments of conflicts and crises. Some influential figures in the journalistic community congratulated themselves on having helped to bring this about. Roy Gutman of *Newsday* identified "the glare of media attention … and public outcry" as having been instrumental in triggering intervention to prevent "savagery" in former Yugoslavia (Gutman and Rieff, 2000).

The Responsibility to Protect appears to promote the obligation to respond to what it calls "conscience-shocking situations" above even the need to obtain legal cover – and how is our conscience to be shocked, if events such as those in Rwanda drop off the edges of the news agenda? They did so, remember, because the authorities in the nation states that dominate international news flow – the US and UK – had no interest in drawing attention to it. Indeed, as Linda Melvern has shown, in a memorable piece of investigative journalism, they conspired, in closed session of the UN Security Council, to prevent the word, 'genocide' from being used in official communiqués (Melvern, 2006).

The 'hierarchy of death', a phenomenon of the alignment of news with nation, and the underpinning, in turn, for pervasive journalistic conventions of sourcing and framing in representations of the world around us, was now at odds, more clearly than before, with the job many journalists – like David Loyn – aspire to do, and with what I have called "time-honoured expectations" that journalism will provide "a reliable account of what is really going on" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: xv).

The journalism of attachment

Into this context was inserted the concept of 'the journalism of attachment', which Hanitzsch has characterized as: "belong[ing] to the broad area of political public relations as it clearly has the intention to alter attitudes and behaviours of the audiences" (2004: 193).

This is a little unfair, but there is a problem with journalists becoming what one critic called "Solomons of the cyber-age" and framing stories about conflict solely in terms of human rights abuses; not necessarily because of what Hanitzsch, too, reads as intentionality, but perhaps merely by the act of framing. Entman puts it well:

"To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, *in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*" (emphasis added) (1993: 51-52).

The point is, as Chandler (2002) shows, expectations that allegations of human rights abuse will be met with military intervention can be responsible for prolonging wars – the pursuit of positive peace can imperil negative peace.

Then, appeals to human rights were instrumentalised, in political public relations, to sway publics behind military interventions in Yugoslavia – the Kosovo case – and Iraq. Yes, Iraq. British Prime Minister Tony Blair intoned, on the day of the worldwide anti-war marches in February, 2003:

"The moral case against war has a moral answer: it is the moral case for removing Saddam. It is not the reason we act. That must be according to the UN mandate on weapons of mass destruction. But it is the reason, frankly, why if we do have to act, we should do so with a clear conscience".

This new line, accompanied by (yet another) 'dossier', this time from the UK Foreign Office, titled, *Saddam Hussein: crimes and human rights abuses*, proved effective in turning public opinion – and parliamentary opinion – and attaining the majorities in both which sent Britain to war.

One of Blair's earlier speeches, in Chicago, set out what he called "the doctrine of international community". That was in April, 1999, as the bombs were actually dropping on Yugoslavian territory, in Nato's 'Operation Allied Force', and it anticipated the arguments put forward two years later in *The Responsibility to Protect*. However, as I have argued, in this series of exchanges and elsewhere, neither OAF nor 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' met the criteria set out in that document as 'precautionary principles', particularly these:

- Right intention: The primary purpose of the intervention, whatever other motives intervening states may have, must be to halt or avert human suffering…
- Last resort: Military intervention can only be justified when every non-military option for the prevention or peaceful resolution of the crisis has been explored, with reasonable grounds for believing lesser measures would not have succeeded.
- Proportional means: The scale, duration and intensity of the planned military intervention should be the minimum necessary to secure the defined human protection objective.
- Reasonable prospects: There must be a reasonable chance of success in halting or averting the suffering which has justified the intervention, with the consequences of action not likely to be worse than the consequences of inaction.

In this condition, 'human rights' cannot, on their own, offer what I have called "a vantage point from which to observe and report" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 222). Peace journalism is a fuller and more coherent response to the 'post-aligned' – condition we now inhabit. It permits the inspection from the outside of a human rights discourse that can lend itself – and has lent itself – to campaigns to mobilise populations for violent responses to conflict.

In so doing, it creates opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses. Note – opportunities. If society at large does not take those opportunities, or if people do consider non-violent responses, weigh them in the balance, and decide that, after all, they prefer violent ones, so be it. What we can say is that the effect of journalistic conventions on news representations of conflict is such as to constrict those opportunities. Peace journalism is not about promoting peace – it's about giving peace a chance.

Determinism

Time for the pendulum to swing back a little. If the case for peace journalism should not be interpreted as a form of intentionalism, then neither should it be seen as deterministic. To catch the distinctions, our theoretical net needs to be finer than that which Hanitzsch weaves out of his structural-functionalist threads. It is not that we can judge, finally, which is the 'best' or 'true' definition of culture; rather, to hold a meaningful conversation about peace journalism, we need to conceptualise culture in such a way as to foreground the contestability of cultural practices like journalistic representations and conventions.

The condition we're in *contains* this contestation; without it, we would be in a different condition. Loyn is right to observe that news about conflict is now *increasingly* contestable, viewed as a subject for critical examination, rather than a given. Indeed, I lay claim to a modest share of the credit for that, as a co-founder and director of Reporting the World. It's a shame he attended only our first, rather callow effort; by the end, the level of discussion (as recorded in Lynch, 2004) was much higher.

As a response to what I could call this 'post-aligned' condition, peace journalism is present, and rising. Loyn may dislike the findings of my own study, operationalising peace journalism as a set of evaluative criteria for content analysis (Lynch, 2006), but he should be aware that there are others out there (such as Lee and Maslog, 2005 and Lee et al, 2006) and more are coming (Hackett, 2007, to name but one).

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Some of what is being measured may indeed be the result of editors and reporters adopting deliberate strategies to supplement conventions which they see as predisposing the news towards a form we could recognize as war journalism. Some of them may even call it peace journalism; but that should not be seen as a requirement to practise it, or for the rest of us to describe it as such.

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