

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE:
MYTH AND STRUCTURE IN PULITZER PRIZE FEATURE STORIES, 1997-2012

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank my parents, siblings, and grandparents for their continued support during my studies. I would like to thank my friends for their input and wisdom in this thesis. Most of all, I would like to thank my grandma and grandpa Cawthon — this study and degree are dedicated to your memory.

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ABSTRACT

Myth and its components have structured ancient narratives and modern journalistic works. This foundational qualitative study was conducted to understand how myth was used in 15 of the most recent winning Pulitzer Prize features by examining patterns in structural elements and cultural messages communicated in each story.

This study found myth is inseparable from the feature story and subjective writing. In these narratives, myth was observed to influence the version of reality authors conveyed. Mythic elements found in characters' quotes suggested authors internalized myths conveyed by sources and perpetuated them in these stories. This cycle suggests myth lives outside journalistic texts and in the writer, reader, and modern American society. Amid negative themes, the mythic elements within stories were mended with the values of family, hard work, duty to profession, sacredness of finality, and adherence to religion. Authors' reinforced those values by representing characters' complications and the resulting consequences into mythic frameworks.

By addressing a gap in the literature by building on past research in myth and journalism, this study shows that these authors use myth to achieve a variety of effects and that certain components could be considered more award-winning than others. This study's findings support that viewing journalism as myth can reveal patterns in how stories are crafted and provide clues about a culture's values and beliefs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Narrative stories have endured throughout centuries and have manifested as a result of the human need to communicate. Despite the genre, time period or the culture communicating the story, myth has aided in the perpetuation of certain ideas and frameworks, which have endured beyond time, place, and storyteller. As referenced here, myth does not refer to an untruth but “a symbolic narrative that attempts to explain and give meaning to practices and beliefs,” a concept that Lule (2001, p. 101) defines building on past research (Cassirer, 1946; Freud, 1959; Jung, 1959; Malinowski, 1954).

Researchers and scholars have identified similar components of myth in Biblical accounts of triumph and sacrifice, bards’ tales of epic quests, ancient Greek poetry, classic literature, Elizabethan plays, classic cinema, literary journalism, and modern novels, to name a few examples. All of these works could be described as stories, which Franklin (1994) defines as “a sequence of actions that occur when a sympathetic character encounters a complicating situation that he confronts and solves” (p. 71). This definition refers to pivotal interplay between character and action. Myth heavily relies on these same components of character, complication, and structure, which meld to form the narrative’s beginning, middle, and end, no matter the medium in which the story is communicated. Plot and drama rely heavily on the complication that occurs between a story’s beginning and end. Atkinson (1995) calls this order the “sacred pattern” (p. 26). Lule (2001) cites one scholarly forefather of myth, Joseph Campbell:

No human society has yet been found in which such mythological motifs have not been rehearsed in liturgies; interpreted by seers, poets, theologians, or philosophers; presented in art; magnified in song; and ecstatically experienced in life-empowering vision (p. 17).

Myth has the ability to prevail throughout time. For instance, the myth of the hero is common in religious stories, epic poems, and modern film. Myth also is “an integral, unifying aspect of all cultures, ancient and modern” and consequently endures because of its universality. Cultures build their own versions upon ancient frameworks (Lule, p. 21). Thus, myth is not something relegated only to ancient cultures but one that is pervasive in the modern world. Although a present-day myth might not exactly mirror that of its ancient origins, it shares key over-arching similarities that can be identified back to its predecessors. Myth has also been used as a way to identify the beliefs and values, among other traits, of a culture, as those who tell stories are said to “mend” myths with the aspects of a culture, which means that the culture weaves details into the fabric of the myth.

In the past few decades, researchers have examined myth in journalism by identifying mythic qualities in journalistic works (Bird & Dardenne, 1988; Knight & Dean, 1982; Koch, 1990; Lule, 1988; Lule, 2001; Shapiro, 2005; Sykes, 1970). In some of these works, journalists are described as modern scribes of myth, who communicate by using ancient archetypes daily in news and feature stories, whether intentionally or subconsciously. Specifically, journalists intercept and perpetuate myth and employ similar archetypes, themes, and other elements repeatedly in their stories (Shapiro, 2005,

2006). These mythic elements are a part of the scaffolding that journalists use to construct their articles. In order to identify similarities among stories, examining each for particular components of myth is thought to be a way to operationalize and make detailed observations about the myth employed, a similar approach to analyzing the components that comprise a narrative. Lule (1988) writes that the “powerful, timeless drama that made sense and gave meaning to events that seemed beyond meaning and sense” is a driving force behind myth's continued use in journalism (p. 102).

There was a boom in mythic cultural studies in the Western world during the 1970s and 1980s; scholars analyzed a variety of news events for their mythic properties, as journalists were thought to implant, knowingly or unknowingly, ancient stories with the beliefs, values and other cultural imprints of their time, a process referred to earlier as “mending” (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Lule, a practitioner and journalism myth scholar, observes that there has been a lull in recent research concerning myth and journalism, despite its prevalence in news and its integral role in making meaning in story (2001). Lule more importantly affirms myth’s ability to construct interesting stories that create dramatic accounts that engage readers.

Another important aspect of studying myth as journalism relates to Smith’s (1975) argument that “language, style, and format” are “products of a process of reciprocal symbolic interaction between the newspaper and its audiences” (p. 22). This process suggests that a newspaper produces what it thinks audiences are seeking. If audiences are seeking engaging stories with familiar mythic components, whether the producers of those texts realize it or not, journalists are more likely to embed those

elements within a text, explicitly or implicitly. The survival of certain mythic elements in journalism could be a result of reinforcing their implementation via positive responses from audiences and institutional accolades, such as a Pulitzer Prize. Jon Franklin (2007) suggests another reason for this perpetuation of mythic elements: “We like stories because we think in stories. It’s how we derive meaning from the world” (p. 111). Myth becomes a part of that idea especially when stories of hope, triumph, sorrow, and jubilation help meaning manifest via words, language, and narrative construction.

The implementation of mythic components and structures in journalism correlates with the concept of frames, which are story structures or frameworks that authors choose and implement subconsciously or intentionally. Entman (1993) identifies frames as “central organizing ideas within a narrative account of issues or events; they provide interpretive cues for otherwise neutral events” (p. 7). Using this perspective, framing theory would also support the idea of mythic structures in journalism in that myth conveys a certain perspective of characters, events, and issues concerning how the author chooses to portray those components. Myth also acts as a way to structure the text. Like myth, frames are unearthed by examining certain components within a text or narrative, specifically “key words, metaphors, concepts, symbols, visual images, and names given to persons, ideas and actions” (Kuypers, 2010, p. 301). Also similar to myth, frames chosen by writers and editors can become pervasive throughout time and “are located in the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture at large” (p. 301). Such pervasiveness suggests that frames and myths are a part of how humans communicate as a way to organize and make sense of the information presented. Both can also be used as

approaches to understand what a culture deems important, how issues are viewed, as well as its beliefs and values.

The myth, like the frame, determines the emphasis placed on certain elements in a text. Particular story components are given more prominence under a specific frame (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). This implementation alludes to the subjectivities present within news stories, which can affect how a subject within a story is portrayed and how society should view that subject. If a reader has judged information as important, frames have the power to amplify those judgments previously stored to memory, whether consciously or unconsciously. Frames and myths draw out and build upon previously stored attitudes. This idea is a testament to their ability to prevail throughout stories about similar topics and throughout time. When authors use myth to construct a narrative, they knowingly or unknowingly reemphasize certain values, beliefs and portrayals indicative of a culture (Sykes, 1970). Just as frames can serve as a way to structure of a story, myth also acts as a way that journalists can organize stories as they build a narrative. Narrative is a prominent storytelling structure found in feature writing, a journalistic writing style descended from literary journalism.

Pulitzer-winning journalism has served as institutionalized examples of what constitutes excellence in the realm of newspapers and alternative weeklies. Arguably some of the best feature writers are Pulitzer-winners. Their stories have been described as “moving,” “compelling,” or “gripping” — descriptions that allude to the authors’ skilled abilities to create engaging stories that are emotional and dramatic. Such adjectives describe the themes of the stories themselves, which focus on death, disaster, and illness,

topics that are inherently emotional and dramatic (Garlock, 2003; Moore & Lamb, 2005; Shapiro, 2005; Shapiro, 2006). Shapiro (2005) argues that myths and archetypes can be extorted from literary journalism and identifies feature stories as prime exemplars of mythic texts. The scholar supports these affirmations and cites that “the feature story is a genre whose genesis is found in man's timeless desire to shape and recount tales of human experience” (p. 7). Such stories are universal and enhance a myth’s ability to prevail throughout time, place, and culture.

The literature specifies that authors of literary journalism, or feature writers, gather a large amount of information and typically spend more time on a story than would a general assignment reporter. Such intimacy with sources and depth of reporting would indicate that the author has a greater influence on the final text, namely because of the genre’s more subjective leanings and the author’s desire use devices to engage the reader. This process suggests a careful selection and manipulation of mythic techniques that emerge as a story’s scaffolding. Thus, myth should reside within the stories, descriptions, and headlines of winning Pulitzer features (Barringer, 1998; Fuller, 2010; Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Kuypers, 2010; Moore & Lamb, 2005; Tuen van Djik, 1991).

This study seeks to examine myth’s components, namely the archetypes of structure and character that are used in Pulitzer-winning feature stories. Such elements were selected because of their ability to be identified and analyzed. Although past research has relied on a single or few perspectives to identify an overarching myth within news stories, this study will utilize a variety of approaches employed in past studies and by award-winning narrative journalism practitioners to identify components of myth in

hopes of discovering more about the inner-workings of these pieces. The purpose of this approach is to unify academic research and journalistic practice by addressing the central questions: What mythic archetypal elements are perpetuated in exemplary newspaper feature stories and how are those elements portrayed?

Specifically, this research uses the following as guides to identify character (myth's archetypal figures) and their action as they relate to myth: Lule's (2001) seven news myths, Booker's (2004) seven basic plots, and Franklin's (1994) outlining technique for writing dramatic stories. Also supporting this approach are Burke's pentad of dramatic stories (1969) and Aristotle's (2000) elements of tragedy identified in *Poetics*; both works' categories mirror the news elements of who, what, when, where, why, and how; all provide a useful way of categorizing and assessing characters' actions. These approaches also aid in revealing how journalists imbue a myth with its own beliefs and values, and in turn patch "holes" in understanding with aspects of the culture (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Franklin (1994) and Koch (1990) argue that character and action are inexorably linked, which strengthens the argument for examining myth via character and the problems they encounter; how characters overcome, endure or reconcile those complications; and what values and beliefs are communicated. Story subject and themes are useful to analyze and differentiate between myth influenced by an author's spin on a story and the subject matter of a story. Other mythic components such as ritual, motif, symbol, etc., aid in completing this study's multi-dimensional analysis of mythic structures in Pulitzer-winning feature stories.

In 1978, the Pulitzer Prize, an award considered the pinnacle of excellence for American newspapers, added the features category and recognized the work of those bridging the gulf between literature and journalism. Formed nearly 60 years after the Prize's creation in 1917, the features category was created to recognize the growing number of the genre's practitioners (Moore & Lamb, 2005). Jon Franklin's piece about brain surgery won the first award in 1979. Since then, 33 feature writers have earned journalism's highest honor as of 2012 (Pulitzer, 2012). Further evidence of the form's vitality is evidenced by the number of students and practitioners studying and employing the craft. Even in the digital age of quick-hit articles and 140-character news bursts, newspapers and alternative weeklies are still allotting space for the long-form feature story that can reach tens of thousands of words and multiple chapters. Myth might be an avenue to keep a publication's audiences reading from the lead to the final word. This supports the importance of analyzing how myth might be used in journalism, namely feature stories.

Academically, this research builds upon the existing body of research concerning myth by examining another category of journalism that is lacking in this area of study: award-winning journalism and newspaper feature stories. The techniques employed in these stories also contribute to how researchers can examine journalistic works for mythic elements by utilizing an approach that employs multiple perspectives: cultural studies, English, and communications. Also, this tactic aims to lessen the weaknesses of a single approach and amplify the ability to adequately identify multiple mythic components in these stories. This multi-dimensional approach aims to categorize multiple elements of

myth to illustrate what components Pulitzer feature winners employ and how certain archetypes are portrayed. For example, although some stories did not perfectly mirror a plot archetype or might lack reference to a sacred place, mythic symbolic elements and exact replications of archetypal figures might be more salient. Thus, the categories derived from the literature will be used as guides to formulate categories in this research. Also, analyzing mythic elements has been a way researchers identified the values and beliefs of a particular culture, so certain components of myth might reveal something about American culture or at least the cultural portrayal the Prize rewards (Lule, 2001; Koch, 1990; Sykes, 1970). Although the generalizability of this study is limited to Pulitzer feature stories, it does contribute to an understanding of what the institution of journalism deems “excellent.”

Through the lens of myth, this research’s practical applications serve as a way for journalists to understand how myth might make a story more “effective.” This study also serves as a foundation for research that studies how mythic story structures might be a way to engage readers, especially in the digital age of declining newspaper subscriptions. Practitioners attest to the difficulty of writing engaging feature stories and cite years of practice necessary to master the craft. This research is a stepping-stone toward an understanding of what could make a feature story award-winning. Also, this study builds upon past research about how authors craft exemplary narrative stories (Lule, 1988; Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, 2006).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As newspapers struggle to retain readers, the practice of narrative and its ability to resuscitate newsprint has gained more interest in the research community. Specifically, such studies have revolved around how writers can better engage readers, what constitutes award-winning journalism, and the elements that make up literary journalism (Beasley, 1998; Belgrade, 1990; Berner, 1986; Bogart, 2004; Craig, 2006; Donohew, Donohew, Palmgreen, & Duncan, 1980; 1982; Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle 2006; Zerba, 2008). Myth has been cited as a way authors can better engage readers (Lule, 2001; Shapiro, 2006; Weinblatt, 2008). Narrative elements correspond to literary journalism, which is a surge of movements that countered the objectivism present in newspapers during the late 1800s and early 1900s. It invited readers into the lives of the story's subjects and, according to Hartsock (2006), spurred a more critical perspective than a straight-news account could (p. 76). Literary journalism, narrative, and myth are linked, and the structure of each depends on a narrative structure of beginning, middle, and end (Koch, 1990; Lule, 2001).

Hard news, based on the “just the facts” inverted-pyramid style, does have strengths. Its prevalence and longevity in news allude to its usefulness in certain situations, especially for fast consumption. Readers who skim and don't read a story in its entirety can obtain important information quickly. Conversely, the hard news story is less able to engage readers from beginning to end, and background information that adds context might come too late in the article (Beasley, 2005; Iglesias, 2005). Without

implementing a narrative form, reader engagement is less likely. This study is not concerned with measuring reader engagement but identifying what mythic elements are present within award-winning newspaper feature stories and how those elements are depicted — insights that are a part of a foundational study that is designed to support future research.

Literary journalism manifested from people's desires to understand the world around them. Hartsock (2000) argues that the news, which was sometimes media consumers' only view to the world, struggled to deliver an intimate perspective, a component people desired. Population booms, sharp increases in wealth, and an increase in alien residents were major historical and cultural developments; financial crises, economic downturns, and other social trends also carried a heavy influence. Hartsock notes that these events had such deep personal meaning for those who lived the 1960s. Consequently, journalists using the straight news style found it difficult to cover multiple facets of an issue or relate issues to readers. That, Hartsock wrote, left people unsatisfied.

Research illustrates that modern readers don't prefer the inverted pyramid or traditional news conventions. It can be considered boring or dull (Donohew, 1982). Beasley (1998) cited the results of a 1947 study that found that each additional paragraph written in the inverted pyramid style decreased readership. Beasley also found that readers indicated that stories utilizing narrative were more engaging and appealing. This finding echoes other studies. Zerba (2008) concluded that the narrative form made stories about murder and violence more enjoyable to read and that "narrative storytelling could have a positive influence on perceived comprehension, learning, interest, and enjoyment"

(p. 100). Donohew, Palmgreen, and Duncan (1980) concluded that the narrative style generated more interest and arousal for media consumers, even if the ideas presented affirmed or refuted readers' pre-established perceptions. Donohew (1982) argued that a transition to frequent use of narrative would yield an increase in readership, though it was never specified or tested how large that increase could be.

Although the inverted pyramid style delivers information more quickly and is easier to shorten to fit page constraints, such stories aren't designed to be read with a narrative arc; "endings" arrive abruptly and often do not provide a satisfying conclusion (Beasley, 1998). Literary writing has made its way into the hard news section, often in the form of narrative leads that utilize techniques like those of fiction pieces (Beasley 1998; Royal & Tankard, 2004; Wolfe, 1973). Connecting these findings to myth in narrative, Lule (1988) found myth in news stories by assessing multiple news reports over a span of time as a single narrative and discovered that there was an increase in the story's ability to make journalistic works dramatic.

The practitioners, proponents, and scholars of narrative attest to its power to engage. Mark Kramer noted during a narrative conference that "narrative hugs and holds readers in these times of dropping newspaper circulation and wandering audience attention" (Giles, 2002, p. 8). These assertions allude to the possibility that researchers and practitioners have stumbled upon a technique that could win readers back to newspapers in print and online. This study intends to explore the inner workings of the writing craft to further the scope of research that explores the power of narrative and the mythic components dwelling inside it.

Pulitzer Culture

Since 1917, The Pulitzer Prize has been an award synonymous with journalism's most prestigious honor. When the January deadline nears each year, entries flood the headquarters at Columbia University in New York City. Poetry, fiction, international reporting, music, works of photojournalism, and feature writing are just some of the categories inundated by hundreds of entries. The judging process is intense, and sometimes, no winner is selected. Pulitzer winners are considered to be an elite group of journalists, deemed so by the institution of journalism. Such winners are more likely than other reporters to have studied journalism at a university (Volz & Lee, 2012). Receiving a Pulitzer can increase a reporter's reputation and increase the reputability of a newsroom, two elements usually indicative of large news organizations — the type of publications that can afford to enter annual awards contests. Funding these stories can cost thousands. For perennial Pulitzer-winners, a winless streak could be detrimental. Some note that the Prize has become a way for news organizations to determine which publication is most prestigious (Hohenberg, 1997; Moore & Lamb, 2005; Shepard, 2000).

The New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and The Wall Street Journal are the all-time Pulitzer-winning publications and have earned the nickname, the "Big Four." Since the 1960s, those papers have won an increasing share of the total Pulitzers awarded and snagged 52 percent of the awards from 2000 to 2006. These papers have more time and money to free reporters from their usual beats. These journalists pursue deeper and longer stories that require more time and resources to cover, a luxury that smaller papers cannot afford (Shaw, 2006, p. 34). When a smaller paper wins, one

2007 study noted that those within the journalism industry called it “impressive” or a “fluke” (Hatcher, p. 100). Small community newspapers usually have daily issues to cover and usually cannot afford to allocate a single reporter to a time-intensive story. Most Pulitzer-winning feature stories are several thousand words in length and some are published in a series or in multiple parts. Consequently, the sentence, paragraph, column, page, chapter, and the entire narrative as a whole must be written in an engaging manner (Kramer, 2001).

Also, major newspapers are accused of organizing coverage for the sake of a Pulitzer win, and judges are accused of selecting winners based on politics rather than merit (Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, 2006). Scandal befell the awards in the feature category’s third year when Janet Cooke’s 1981 piece about an 8-year-old heroin addict was proven fabricated (Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, 2006). Consequently, newspaper editors discourage use of the narrative style because of concerns that inaccuracies will creep into the copy. Fiction masquerading as journalism has tainted narrative in some newspaper editors’ eyes. Invention is against the journalists’ creed, though some authors tread the line; literary journalist Gay Talese commented that fact should not be altered to make writing more interesting (Giles, 2002).

The prize has more to its less-than-flattering side. Past studies have uncovered that journalists and their organizations admit to pursuing awards and celebrating victories (Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, 2006). Some have even deemed the contest as a “self-congratulatory industry beauty pageant,” alluding to the institution of journalism, not readers, deeming what is award-winning and what is not (Moore & Lamb, 2005, p. 42).

Some have criticized the prizes for allowing past winners and those affiliated with winning publications to serve as judges on the committees (Hohenberg, 1997; Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, 2006). Such a process could suggest the perpetuation of specific story characteristics considered Pulitzer-worthy.

In 2004, no award for features was given because the Pulitzer committee did not reach a consensus (Harris, 2004). Some judges have said that the feature writing section is more difficult to win than other categories (Shepard, 2000). For publications who are looking to integrate the style into the daily practice, reorganization and writing coaches might be necessary. Both are testaments to the difficulty of this style and the changes required to incorporate this practice into traditional newsrooms (Kramer, 2001).

The Pulitzer's criteria for winning the prize is vague. A briefly statement on the Pulitzer website says that feature stories that win have meet the following criteria:

A distinguished example of feature writing giving prime consideration to quality of writing, originality and concision, using any available journalistic tool, including text reporting, videos, databases, multimedia or interactive presentations or any combination of those formats, in print or online or both, Ten thousand dollars (Pulitzer, 2011).

This vagueness of what constitutes excellence is common in journalism contests, not just the Pulitzers, as researchers concluded in a study of a Canadian prize-winning contest (Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, 2006). Some researchers affirm that there is no way to derive a formula for excellence in journalistic craft or practice, though determining patterns within stories is possible (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & William, 2001;

Hohenberg, 1997). Perhaps consequently, there is a lack of research concerning identifying components of feature stories, specifically those stories that win awards and the mythic components buried deep inside them. Commonalities among stories might suggest that stories with certain mythic components or portrayals are more likely to win.

The Inner-Workings of a Pulitzer Feature

Ample literature exists concerning Pulitzer Prizes and literary journalism, but little has been written that bridges the two areas. One study, however, alludes to themes that are pervasive in Pulitzer stories. According to Moor and Lamb's 2005 study, the majority of Pulitzer-winning feature headlines focus on a life and death struggle and that the prizes reflect the mainstream media's fixation on negativity. Judges used words such as "gripping," "compelling," or "moving" to describe winning stories. Tragedy, catastrophe, disaster, and chaos were recurring themes of most stories (Barringer, 1998; Moore & Lamb, 2005, p. 50). Garlock (2003), who compiled a book of Pulitzer feature winners from 1979 to 2003, described those winning pieces as "tragic," "touching," "gripping," "powerful," and "harrowing" (xi-xii). Such terms are also indicative of drama, an important element in winning stories, as expressed by Seymour Topping, former administer of the Pulitzer board (Barringer, 1998). These findings serve as a springboard for this research concerning myth and these topics.

Moore and Lamb (2005) found that sixteen of the 25 winning Pulitzer feature entries originated from the U.S. east coast. The same study uncovered positive depictions of the Christian religion in 22 of the 25 winning entries. This finding would support the existence of myth in stories that authors use to communicate cultural values, such as

hope, faith, despair, and triumph. In the 2005 study, main characters in the stories sampled were typically Christian, an observation that suggests Christian metaphor and symbolism could be a guiding force of cultural beliefs and values in Pulitzer features. Such “recycled values and plots” were thought to confirm readers’ pre-existing beliefs (Moore & Lamb, 2005, p. 19). This finding supports the argument that myth is universal and has the ability to endure. While the 2005 study uncovered “hidden” themes and other trends, the researchers did not state that texts were assessed for mythic elements, nor how such elements were portrayed. Also, the study did not examine feature stories from 2005 onward, so trends might have altered since then. The researchers did supply findings that indicate mythic elements are likely strong components of Pulitzer features.

Another 2006 study found that of the 10 categories that surfaced from interviews about excellence with judges of two leading journalism awards programs, “writing style,” “research rigor,” and “originality” were the top three traits of a winning piece, respectively (Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, p. 427). The scholars concluded that a better-written piece is more likely to win an award and that excellent form is better than excellent content, though both are important. This finding supports the importance for analysis of journalistic writing, if judges laud those components. The study also explored the murky relationship between excellence and quality but was inconclusive in linking the two concepts.

Although Pulitzer feature stories are written and reported differently under various time and space constrictions, Garlock (2003) notes one commonality that he says all 33 entries likely share: “strong emotions and content — powerful, touching,

frightening, harrowing journalism” (xii). These descriptors indicate mythic components are likely facilitators of these sensations.

Shapiro (2006) cited Michele Weldon’s *Everyman News: How and Why American Newspapers Changed Forever* that researched 20 newspapers of varying sizes across the U.S. The researcher found that newspapers utilized more unofficial sources, had more profile articles, and had fewer hard news stories on page 1, since September 11, 2001. Weldon found a 43 percent increase in personal feature stories on the front pages of newspapers from 2001 to 2004, due to what she calls “post 9/11 sensitivity.” This phenomena, the researcher argued, bolstered the “Portraits of Grief” published in The New York Times to a Pulitzer win. Weldon argued that personal stories are chosen as vehicles to communicate information and beliefs, a function myth accomplishes as well (Shapiro, 2006, p. 54).

Narrative and myth are unified in that both have the ability to structure stories. Narrative’s beginning, middle, and end, relates to what Franklin (1994) called complication, development, and resolution. Within these structures, are what Berner (1986) deemed “the elements of good reporting” in newspaper feature stories: narration, scene, summary and process, point of view, drama chronological organization, rhythm, imagery, foreshadowing, metaphor, irony, dialogue, overall organization (beginning, middle, and end), and verification and documentation. Tying in with past criticisms of the inverted pyramid’s weakness of sacrificing realism for the sake of consuming information quickly, Berner notes that narrative’s structure is what makes it powerful and

engaging (p. 6). This argument also builds upon the potential for newspaper feature stories to be strong perpetuators of myth.

Literary Journalism: The Pulitzer Feature's Journalistic Ancestor

Finding a consensus of what works are literary journalism is a difficult endeavor due to the genre's many affiliations with other styles and its general nebulosity. Abrahamson's (2000) definition pairs two traditionally distinct realms when he defines literary journalism as the "intersection between literature and journalism." Royal and Tankard (2004) defined the form as a writing technique that "seeks to communicate facts through narrative storytelling and literary techniques" (p. 82). Wolfe (1973) identified New Journalism, another name for literary journalism, as a form of journalistic writing "that would read like a novel" (p. 9). Pan and Kosicki (1993) found similarities in works produced by reporter and fiction writers, in that both contained similar elements within their narratives. Tracy Kidder told Sims (1995) that his writing increasingly mirrored the techniques of fiction as time passed. Sims portrayed such writers as "boundary crossers," as many literary journalists have a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and styles that inform their craft. This idea of the incorporation of literary techniques is the central idea behind the form's identifying features.

The form has been called New Journalism, narrative storytelling, creative nonfiction, intimate journalism, and literary nonfiction (Beasley, 1998; Giles, 2002; Hartsock, 2000; Hornmoen, 2006; Moore & Lamb, 2005; Royal & Tankard, 2004; Tankard & Hendrickson, 1996; Wolfe, 1973). Critics called the works from Wolfe's (1973) New Journalism movement "'impressionistic' journalism, 'subjective' journalism,

New Left Journalism, ‘participatory’ journalism,” among others (Wolfe, 2007). Although a common label isn’t utilized among practitioners and researchers, this study will refer to the form as literary journalism and feature writing for the sake of consistency.

There is little consensus on the origins of literary journalism. Those who produced this form of writing were usually journalists who wrote for newspapers and magazines; the form, though journalistic in its reporting and use of facts, was “literary.” Norman Sims, a literary journalism historian, identifies Daniel Defoe’s work in the early 1700s as the earliest work of literary journalism (Hartsock, 2000; Kramer, 1995). Hartsock notes that Ernest Hemingway, John Hersey, Norman Mailer, and James Agee were early contributors to the style and developed the elements that have become staples of the genre. Mark Twain published *Innocence Abroad*. Henry David Thoreau’s Cape Cod sketches were published in 1855 in *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine*. *Georgia Scenes* by Augustus Baldwin Longstreet was published in newspapers during the 1830s. These instances suggest literary newswriting’s origins came long before the craft’s surge in the 1960s and 1970s. In a less direct example, letters exchanged between Samuel Johnson and James Boswell could be considered literary journalism; Boswell referred to “true-life accounts” when he implemented real details to describe a character he meets during his journey (Hartsock, 2000).

The popular press frequently used narrative techniques during the post-Civil War period as well. In Stephen Crane's New York City sketches developed “contrast, dialogue, concrete description, detailed scene setting, careful word selection that build in repetition of imagery, and irony” about daily life, characteristics of the form that are still

pertinent today (Hartsock, 2000, p. 25). Crane had been producing work that contained these elements since 1892. During that time, Frank Norris' work incorporated recreated scenes. Lafcadio Hearn documented African American life on the Cincinnati levee in *Life on the Mississippi*. Other works of literary journalism during the 1870s would surface two decades later, though Hearn also produced traditional hard news stories, fiction, folklore studies, and anthropological accounts as well — genres that have relied on myth for centuries. During Hearn's career, his work contained dialogue between sources and internal dialogue that he imagined running inside the minds of his characters. Hearn's work would be a precursor to the literary realism produced by such greats as Anton Chekhov. E.B (Hartsock, 2000). E. B. White moved deftly between fiction and journalism. This versatility and diversity of writing alluded to the many camps that influenced narrative journalism and the sub-genres that are still part of the form.

Although literary journalism exercises many writing techniques, Sims (2005) recognizes that many of these stories examine the lives, experiences, and feelings of “everyday” people. Studying the form can reveal patterns in human existence (Shapiro, 2005, 2006). James Agee's and Walker Evan's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (2000), first published in 1941 after years of reporting and writing, explored the lives of Depression-era sharecroppers. John Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1989), first appeared in an entire August 31, 1946 edition of the New Yorker. The narrative reconstructed six people's experiences of surviving the infamous atomic bomb explosion that decimated the Japanese city. To the reader, these people are relatable because the story was written in such a way that Americans could sympathize with the victims. Therefore, characters'

extraordinary stories were more believable. Building on this idea, Sims (1995) wrote that literary journalists “find ordinary people and the drama, emotion, and complexity in their lives a worthy focus” (p. 4). Thus, readers must be able to relate to characters.

Magazine writers of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s explored the craft of narrative. Hartsock (2000) argues that the emergence of literary journalism at this time was a response to illuminate “more honest interpretations of the phenomenal world that challenged safe critical assumptions” (p. 42). Wolfe (1973) credits the incorporation of realism into fictional novellas of the 1700s as an influence to literary journalism and a catalyst for the New Journalism movement. During the 1960s, writers began to adopt literary techniques and incorporated devices of the novel, which Wolfe identifies as “immediacy,” “concrete reality,” “emotional involvement,” “gripping,” and “absorbing qualities” (p. 31).

A subcategory of literary journalism called New Journalism surged in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the counter-culture movement. It was dubbed the “New Journalism” by one of its biggest proponents, Tom Wolfe, in his book by the same name (Schudson, 1978, p. 188; Hartsock, 2000; Wolfe, 1973). This was a major contributing factor to the Pulitzer’s creation of a feature writing category in 1979 (Moore & Lamb, 2005).

Wolfe’s book, *The New Journalism*, which also became the namesake of the movement, hinted at a technique that writers had practiced since the 1800s but hadn’t been widely popular until the 1970s. New Journalism challenged journalism’s traditional conventions and institutional norms that expected a distanced or facts-only reporting

approach. New Journalism recognized that the reporter's experiences were valid and sometimes vital to weave into the fabric of a final story (Eason, 1982, p. 147-148). Wolfe (1973) credits the writers of New Journalism movement as being the genre's unintentional pioneers. Wolfe recognizes that the form is amorphous and nebulous, as it crossed previous boundaries in writing. He called these hard-news dodging journalists "feature writers," who used the lengthier section of the newspaper as a pit-stop on their way to writing "The Novel." The title literary journalist didn't exist, and Wolfe writes that no one aspired to such a title (p. 5). The creation of the Pulitzer category of feature writing was perhaps a way to award those who were writing in a literary style that was printed with the same ink and on the same paper as hard news. This change could have made the newspaper a final destination, rather than a rung in the ladder on the way to writing success.

The genre of "New Journalism" certainly had its share of critics in the journalism and literary realm, who lambasted it as a pseudo-form of journalism that invented facts and was a lesser form of the era's highly respected novel. Wolfe (1973) credits Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* as a work that cemented New Journalism as a legitimate genre, one that Capote labeled "the nonfiction novel" (p. 26). In 1966, John Sack's Esquire article about M Company during the Vietnam War eventually became a book. George Plimpton wrote about his experience training with the Detroit Lions when assumed the role of a rookie quarterback and played in a pre-season game. Hunter S. Thompson embedded himself with the motorcycle gang Hell's Angels for 18 months for his book. He recounted being beaten while reporting. Joan Didion's articles about 1960s California

appeared in *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*, a book she wrote at about the same time. In 1968, Norman Mailer utilized the memoir form and wrote a book reflecting on the anti-war demonstrations he had participated in, titled *The Steps to the Pentagon*. Like John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, which occupied an entire issue of *The New Yorker*, Harper's Magazine allocated a whole issue for Mailer's work (Wolfe, 1973, p. 23-26). Some lengthier Pulitzer-winning feature articles have become books, including Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey* (2003) and Tom French's *Angels and Demons* (1998).

Franklin (1996) recalls during his stint at the Baltimore Evening Sun, the newspaper that published his Pulitzer-winning feature story *Mrs. Kelly's Monster*, that an editor announced that bigger stories were increased from 20 inches to 50 inches. This change, Franklin wrote, occurred at other newsrooms across the country and initiated a movement that prompted writers to study fictional techniques, specifically how they could be employed in journalism. He affirms that all attempts were not successful. Some journalists were better reporters than writers. Some struggled with chronology. Others constructed a 50-inch inverted pyramid story, substituting narrative for a deluge of facts. Franklin (1996) wrote it took him a decade to understand the form.

As explained earlier, it is difficult to write journalism in a literary style, which increases the intrigue of this study in its role as a practical guide. Narrative reporting is demanding and requires "participant observation, in-depth interviews, and extensive notetaking" (Murphy, 1974, p. 34). Those who write in the style indicated in a 2005 study that they had no formal training in literary journalism (Beasley). Those same respondents said that a common fault with ineffective narratives are superfluous details and an excess

of information; great writing is needed to hold readers' attention throughout the piece. Wolfe (1973) writes that applying literary devices to journalism requires tedious, careful planning. As an indicator of editorial quality, Bogart (2004) found that newspaper editors and magazine editors ranked literary style last, which indicates that the form, though making its way into narrative leads, is still not a widely utilized style in news, despite studies referenced earlier that suggested its effectiveness in engaging readers.

Elements of literary journalism as indicators of myth. The devices and techniques that constitute literary journalism are numerous and past works list differing criteria that characterize the form. According to the literature, the most pervasive elements in a narrative or literary journalism piece are: sympathetic characters readers can empathize with; details and imagery that appeal to the senses; scenes; dialogue; specificity and concrete concepts that avoid abstractions; strong verbs that create action; inclusion of the writer's perspective; elements that evoke emotion; literary devices; an intimate perspective; and an emphasis on showing rather than telling (Beasley, 1998; Giles, 2002; Hartsock, 2000; Hornmoen, 2006; Moore & Lamb, 2005; Royal & Tankard, 2004; Tankard & Hendrickson, 1996; Wolfe 1973).

Practitioners of the form, some Pulitzer winners, identified other elements that fleshed out narrative journalism. Christopher "Chip" Scanlan commented that the reporting process incorporates immersion and that the writing is strategic and language is carefully chosen; the story should involve opposing factions, an indicator of conflict. Jacqui Banaszynski, the 1988 Pulitzer feature winner, stated that scenes, characters, "enormous detail" and theme are important components (Giles, 2002, p. 8). Tom French,

the 1998 Pulitzer feature winner, emphasized that drama, simile, metaphor, and emotionally charged language should be present in effective narratives; Isabelle Wilkerson, the 1994 Pulitzer feature winner, added that such stories should feature a “sympathetic protagonist, who is flawed” and “ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances,” and attention to elements that make the story “real” (Giles, 2002, p. 8). These details are particularly indicative of stories that utilize mythic qualities. Mark Kramer added that narrative needs to be “gripping” in content and subject matter (Giles, 2002, p. 9). Some of these comments are reflective of myth and its components — such as theme, characters, drama, emotionally charged language — which strengthens the argument that writers are often intentionally incorporating myth into their stories in order to make stories more interesting, whether writers understand these elements as vehicles of myth or not.

Johnson-Cartee (2005) defines narrative as containing a “...fully developed, fully fleshed-out story with characters, scene descriptions, conflict(s), actions with motives, and, ultimately, resolution(s)” (p. 159). The researcher notes that narrative involves how the elements contained within the story are structured and informs a story’s overall architecture, much like myth’s structuring power; such a definition also corresponds with Burke’s 1969 work *Grammar of Motives*, which identifies how dramatic narratives are structured as myth. Such narrative frameworks are present in numerous stories and have similar themes and constructs, statements that support the idea that universal elements exist among stories. Details in stories might make them appear different but should contain many of the same overarching structural elements. This commonality allows

people to make meaning from connections between new ideas and past experiences that create a shared perceived reality (Tannen, 1993, p. 15).

Such narrative frameworks are a part of many forms and genres of journalism, though feature writing should be particularly susceptible to utilizing mythic components because of the form's reliance upon the writer's subjectivities. These arguments suggest that Pulitzer Prize-winning feature stories exhibit similar mythic components that can be identified and compared among stories.

Myth and Its Role in Journalism

Myth has prevailed for centuries in all human stories. Sometimes called “eternal” or “ageless,” myths were believed to have originated from oral tradition, specifically from stories told around campfires (Lule, 2001, p. 2). Drawing from the idea that myths are similar across cultures, Lule builds from the observations of anthropologists to offer an explanation for the commonalities in story forms. As people traded goods with one another, stories also became a commodity people shared. Lule argues that myth is separate from fable, fiction, and legend in that myths have a basis in fictional narratives and in the true accounts presented in journalism.

Lule and Booker (2004) also cited Jung's concept of the “collective unconscious” as a possible source for the similarities in myth. Lule (2001) explains that Jung's term means that myths contain “powerful, primordial patterns — archetypes — that lead to the creation of universal symbols, characters, motifs, stories, and myths” (p. 30). This contributes to the idea that we as humans share many similar life experiences, such as that of birth and that of death, and the emotions and feelings that surround those shared

life occurrences. In today's vastly interconnected world, the transmission of ideas digitally has possibly accelerated the perpetuation of the major structural components of myths, but might also have decreased their homogenization as these myths are given varying characteristics by the many cultures that wield them. Although major structures are present, it is thought that a more effective approach to examining myth is by dissecting it into components to make more detailed comparisons. Those components will be identified later.

Re-emphasizing the definition in Chapter 1, a myth is a "sacred, societal story that draws from archetypal figures and forms to offer exemplary models for human life" (Lule, 2001, p. 15). Myth and its components are effective storytelling tools because they allow others to place themselves in the story. This ability alludes to myth's universality in that its components can be used generally among multiple stories and across cultures. Kluckhohn (1960) posits that although myth does not affirm that two stories are exactly the same, "there are formal resemblances at varying levels of abstraction that are interesting and significant" (p. 48). This means that cultures will alter a myth, or "mend" it, in order for it to take on a recognizable meaning, but its over-arching structure is similar throughout time, culture, and place. This indicates that myth is more general than the elements that comprise it.

Myth also conveys a "perception of a situation and the complex attitudes, beliefs, and values that were used to structure the situation" (Sykes, 1970, p.18). From a linguistic structuralist perspective, Koch (1990) calls myth a narrative system "in which symbols (words) have cultural and contextual relevance" (p. 23).

Expanding on the concepts of making meaning via language and cultural relevance, Schorer (1960) describes myth in terms of its structuring ability in that it is an over-arching concept, “has organizing value for experience,” and imbues everyday facts with “philosophical meaning,” ideas that that illustrate myth’s abilities and functions (p. 355). Building on that statement, Schorer argues that myth and belief are unified, so assessing a text for myth can reveal the beliefs of a culture. A culture utilizes certain prevailing story structures and presents shared perceptions between text and reader. These structures must be adaptable and imprecise to fit the culture from which the myth is communicated.

Sykes’s (1970) definition also communicates myth’s connection to belief in that abstract ideas are expressed in a way that can be observed:

A myth takes the form of a story that embodies certain ideas and at the same time offers a justification of those ideas. If the myth is to be effective it must be so constructed as to appeal to the emotions and enlist sympathy for the ideas expressed, and, at the same time, the subject matter of the story must offer an acceptable justification of these ideas. The actual truth or falsity of the story is irrelevant; what is important is that the story and the ideas it embodies are accepted and believed to be true (p. 17).

Myth succeeds when it communicates perceptions using an imprecise structure or situation. This occurs when many “variables” used to construct the situation are involved and when a situation evolves over time. “Perceptions are created as a result of structuring

situations by means of attitudes, beliefs, and values. Thus, in order to share a perception, individuals must also share similar attitudes, beliefs, and values” (Sykes, 1970, p. 19).

Researchers have discovered ancient mythic elements in modern journalism. Classifying and studying journalistic works as narratives can give insights to the “values and symbols that have meaning in a given culture.” As ancient storytellers fit their own cultural elements to existing story frameworks, so do journalists, using culturally prescribed cues and elements (Bird & Dardenne, 1988, p. 76). Lule (2001) argues a reason for this is that modern newsmakers draw their stories from “a deep but nonetheless limited body of story forms and types that long ago proved their ability to hold audiences,” which also suggests that myths have the ability to engage readers (p. 2). Just as the structures and meanings of stories captivated listeners at campfires long ago, today they do the same on the page, the computer screen, and the mobile reading device.

Not all news stories are myths. “But sometimes, in describing some experience, in reporting some event, reporters and editors draw upon a fundamental story of earthly existence, a universal and shared story of humankind,” and they use that story as a tool “to instruct, inform, celebrate or forewarn” by means of archetypal story patterns and figures (Lule, 2001, p. 18). Journalists are able to tell mythic stories again and again, especially in the world of news where daily stories grace the pages in print and online, an occurrence that becomes “formulaic” (Lule, p. 20).

While myths are viewed in terms of their overarching structures, identifying myth’s individual components are useful when searching for clues about certain aspects of a culture. Carpenter and McLuhan (1960) alluded to this idea when they wrote that

“myth is the mode of simultaneous awareness of a complex group of causes and effects” (p. 266). Complex ideas are better understood when dissected. Eliade argues in his book, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* (1960), that myths are found in the modern world and writes that

an adequate analysis of the diffuse mythologies of the modern world would run into volumes: for myths and mythological images to be found everywhere, laicized, degraded or disguised; one only needs to be able to recognize them (p. 33).

One recognizes myth by studying its components, more specifically by observing myth’s structuring elements. Studying smaller components can reveal what the broader myth communicates: “The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the rolls of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them with complex specifics” (Geertz, 1973, p. 28).

Carpenter and McLuhan (1960) saw “carefully selected elements” that were a part of a collective whole within stories. These details are varied by the cultures, but the myth itself, the overarching archetypal structure, endures — even if the events in the story never actually happened. This is why archetypes and story structures mirror each other even though they were told thousands of years apart in different geographic locations by different cultures. For example, the figure of Jesus can be compared to Gandalf, a wizard who dies and returns to save his people in the fictional *Lord of the Rings* saga. The archetype also appears in films based on real people, such as in the 1982 film *Ghandi*.

Supporting these archetypes are metaphors, symbols, imagery, and emotion, components that are at work forming the entirety of the myth. (Doty, 2000).

The 1970s and 1980s saw a surge of studies that examined myth in journalism. Lule's 1988 study examined journalism's ability to make meaning and what myths communicated about the subjects within the news. In his study of a series of news articles, Lule concluded that the death of the innocent central character was portrayed as sacrifice and allowed the researcher to experience his own death because the narrative invited the reader to experience the events just as the character had. Cohen and Young (1981) argued in their study that crime stories offer a glimpse into a society's "contours" and can be used as guides to what is "right and wrong" what is "evil" within a culture. In such stories, characters were seen as archetypes and became hero, villain, victim, among others. Grabner (1984) built upon this premise by arguing that these stories serve a general purpose and inform a society's meta-structure of moral values and political beliefs. Such "taken-for-granted assumptions" are embedded in a society and its texts concerning what is "obvious, inevitable, eternal, unchangeable" (p. 146).

The view of the genre as narrative implies that it contains a beginning, a climax, and a conclusion. Like fiction, journalists employ such strategies as "maintaining suspense, thickening the plot, and keeping the protagonist alive" (Weinblatt, 2008, p. 34-35). Plot complications discovered in Knight and Dean's 1982 study, found that violence was prominent in stories about the British recapturing of the Iranian embassy in London; the researches concluded that violence in the stories served to contrast the peacefulness of the situation described before the violent events began. This disruption of stability,

according to Weinblatt (2008) and Wahl-Jorgensen (2012), enhances reader engagement, until some sort of resolve is achieved at story's end. The myth in stories enables the reader to connect with the tale and "identify and participate in the tragedy" via "gripping dramatizations" that surround the characters, their emotions, and their environments (Lule, 1988, p. 117), three aspects practitioners stated are a part of literary journalism and feature writing.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 and previously in Chapter 2, cultures imbue or "mend" myths with their own beliefs and values. Koch (1990) argues that journalistic stories carry "the badges of a country's history, a culture's perception, an individual publication's position, and a single newsman's point of view" and that a "narrative conformity" exists between them. These rules function "as a seamless whole" (p. 39).

Shapiro (2005) noted literature was a vehicle for myth when settlers migrated west and tamed the American frontier. Later, literary journalism became a channel for myth, which reflected mainstream sentiments in American society at that time. The myth of the hero is prevalent in American literature and might be used to teach lessons about the American way (Shapiro, 2006, p. 4-10). In assessing winning Pulitzer feature stories, mythic components identified within those narratives are likely thought to be mended with modern American values and beliefs as the authors are typically American and cover American issues.

Applying the previously mentioned concepts to myth, Hollowell (1977) assessed Truman Copote's *In Cold Blood*, for its mythic qualities. The scholar noted that the story contained an "archetypal American family" who are murdered by "warped killers." This

event was depicted to unfold fatalistically rather than by characters' agency, which alludes that what happened to the characters was out of their control. The family exemplifies American values in that the husband succeeded because of hard work, his faith in God, and his service to community. This portrayal of the typical American family is a prevalent myth that is pervasive in other stories, and could be one that is present in the 15 most recent winning Pulitzer Prize feature entries. When the family members are killed, this complication runs counter with what is expected or supposed to occur to those who exemplify what authors have deemed "positive" beliefs. This story as an example of how a culture "mends" the Greek myth of tragedy with that of the American dream.

Shapiro (2001) notes a specific strength of the feature story and its tie to myth in that these types of stories "structure, content and morals reinforce traditional values, the same traditional values extolled by conservative politicians, social critics and church leaders," affirmations that allude to the possible themes that might be encountered in winning Pulitzer feature stories (Shapiro, 2006, p. x).

Myth in objectivist and subjectivist perspectives in journalism. Objectivism has been thought of as the backbone of journalism for centuries, and some practitioners still refer to its plausibility and presence in media, while others deem it an impossible standard. Eason (1981) defines objectivity as "customary linguistic usage, structuring information in a rigid pattern sometimes referred to as the 'inverted pyramid,' supplying brief clear answers to the questions Who?, What?, Where?, When? Why?" (p. 145). Positivism, an approach often applied to objectivism, refers to what we can know via our senses is all we can know about what we are studying (Wien, 2005). The positivist

concept of objectivity implies that one is either objective or subjective, though literary journalism treads in both theoretical realms and honors the author's perspective while assuming that nothing in the story is invented. Wien argues to practice objectivity is to not permit personal assessments to affect knowledge and to accept that facts are derived primarily from sensory experience. Thus from an objectivist perspective, journalists can only know their world via their senses and must leave interpretations up to the reader.

Conversely, Wien (2005) defines subjectivity in the sense that "one's own assessments (attitudes and values) have influence on knowledge." Although many branches diverted from traditional "objective" journalism since the 1850s, the New Journalism's subjectivism was the only form that was successful. Muckraking and yellow journalism were chastised for their invention of facts and tendency to over-sensationalize (Hartsock, 2000; Wien, 2005). Many journalists, including Gay Talese, affirmed that the style of literary journalism does not grant reporters a license to alter facts, create composite characters, or embellish the truth but that an author's portrayal of people and issues in those stories is valid (Giles, 2002, p. 9). As Bird and Dardenne (1988) argue, "while news is not fiction, it is a story about reality, not reality itself" (p. 82).

The institution of news provides journalists who strive to adhere to strict objectivist principles with the defense that all accounts are factual, when in actuality the authors themselves have likely taken liberties and embedded personal perspectives into news accounts. The neutral reality presented in traditional news reporting contrasts with the "symbolic construction," which is a version of the events it examines (Craig, 2006, p. 145). Bird and Dardenne argue that readers do not believe that news is a perfect mirror of

reality but a “symbolic text” that places certain forms of behavior higher than others (p. 71, 1988). Thus, language and the meanings it constructs are conventions that show myth is at work within the feature story and hard news story alike.

Myth in objectivism and hard news. Objectivity has become a valued ideal within the practice of journalism, though the concept of the objective journalist has been critiqued and criticized by the research community and practitioners. The issues with objectivity involve the notion that the account presented is skewed by “the influence of individuals’ standpoints on the world, the limitations of language, organizational pressures on journalists, and the perpetuation of current social injustices” (Craig, 2006, p. 21). Many practitioners would affirm that journalism and myth are mutually exclusive, when research has demonstrated their inevitable link. Perhaps one reason myth and journalism are considered to be bound is because myth and storytelling are inseparable (Shapiro, 2006, p. 32). Journalistic articles are often called stories.

Holding objectivity as a standard to strive for and actually achieving that standard are two different goals. In actual practice, this concept is made murky by the requirement that a journalist adhering to objectivism places the facts in a specific context, which is in of itself a subjective decision and one that could imply that journalists are using myth as a way to portray characters or structure stories (Wien, 2005). In this sense, literary journalists have the power to portray the world as they see it, whether they claim to be an unbiased observer or not (Murphy, 1974).

Objectivism became a standard for journalistic practice in the newsroom in the 1920s. The concept was married with neutrality, distance, fairness, and balance in an

attempt for reporters to negate personal biases and quell any personal subjectivities that might creep into their journalistic reports (Schudson, 2001; Wien, 2005). This concept adopted the ideals presented in science and was a reaction to the emotionally charged stories that were published in the years surrounding World War I (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 112; Schudson, 2001). Walter Lippmann and John Dewey were among those opposed to emotion in reporting because of its tendency to sensationalize reports. They argued that a scientific approach to reporting would yield the most accurate version of events; such a strategy was also said to adhere to the principles of truth and democracy (Lippmann, 1920; Streckfuss, 1990). Counter to many of the previous critiques of the objective journalist, Lippmann (1920) argued that objectivity is an attainable goal for journalists. More critics would later dismantle that argument.

Johnson-Cartee (2005) affirms that a human being completely objective is “ludicrous, for a person’s very knowledge of the world is subjectively constructed, learned, and modified through a process of experience in the context of social interactions, involving role taking, and role modeling through the course of a lifetime” (p. 113). This means that humans bring their individualized approaches and perspectives to issues, so journalists, who are often the sole creators of a text, present their perspective by omitting or including certain details, a trait evident when researchers analyze their published work. Scholars have argued that this tendency is embedded in human nature and, therefore, embedded in journalistic practice, whether in the realm of hard news or that of literary journalism (Fuller, 2010; Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 112-114). Johnson-

Cartee (2005) cited David Morley's (1976) words echoing the idea that language is inherently biased.

Locke (1690) examined how text reflects reality and devised a concept of consciousness that he affirmed

is not bound by the human organic unit, but is a way of perceiving and interacting with the world across time. A center, or locus, of consciousness may reside in a single human being, a group of human beings, or it may exist without any physical manifestation at all (p. 76).

Braman (1984) argues that the perspectives of new journalism and objective journalism concerning fact can inform the journalistic process equally and factually, based on the locus of consciousness referenced. The locus, either that of the media or individual, used will determine the version of reality presented (p. 89). Both versions are, in fact, reality; they are simply two portrayals of actual events.

Wien (2005) identified New Journalism, or literary journalism, as the movement that took cues from "relativism, structuralism, deconstructionism, and postmodernism" (Wien, 2005, p. 10). Although journalism and nonfiction are incorporated into the objectivist school of thought, the genre often embraces subjectivity (Murphy, 1974). These concepts hinge on the idea of what can be discussed about the world using "different signs, such as language" (Wien, 2005, p. 10). An author's choice of language can influence how people, places, things, and ideas are represented. For example, are corporations the invaluable engines of the financial system or soulless monsters that prey on consumers? The literary journalist possesses that control of portrayal.

Rosenstiel and Kovach (2007) discredit the plausibility of an objective reporter and offer that instead the method journalists use can be an avenue for objectivism. Craig (2006) writes that though objectivity might be dismantled as an attainable ideal for journalists, reporters should not overlook truth because objectivity is a more focused concept that dwells within the realm of truth. Building on this idea, Craig (2006) writes that “the notion that journalists should pursue truth and tell truth to their audiences — even if this can be done only incompletely and imperfectly — can help to foster thoughtful evaluation of how journalists use writing techniques” (p. 21).

Myth in subjectivism and feature writing. Bird and Dardenne (1998) honor the merits of the subjective perspective in literary journalism, commenting that though news and fiction are different realms, both present a story about a particular reality, not the entirety of the reality that exists; this perspective has also been communicated by scholars of myth (Carr, 1986; Olsen, 1980). Craig (2006) writes that from a post-modernist vantage point, there exists only narrative. The deepest truth is what society and the individuals within that society deem true (p. 17-18). If we perceive the world because of constant consumption and exposure to language, then journalism and narrative stories are integral in shaping our perceptions about certain issues. The techniques that are present within those elements are especially powerful because they build on how a society perceives reality. The inclusion and omission of certain information and how language is presented in the final text has the ability to influence the reader’s interpretations. This concept also correlates with a component of frames, in that frames employed by the author have the ability to influence readers’ perceptions of a subject; mythic elements in

journalistic texts enable stories to communicate certain beliefs and values via characters and their actions. From this, readers learn lessons of what is right and wrong, ultimately what a culture values. Hartsock argues that all literary practitioners, not just journalists, can implement and have utilized literary journalism reporting and information gathering practices to construct their pieces (Hartsock, 2000, p. 31). Thus, as past research has shown, myth lives in subjective and objective journalism, hard news and feature stories alike (Lule, 2001; Lule, 1988; Shapiro, 2005).

The authors of literary journalism often experimented with point of view and told the story through the eyes of the narrator. In order to tell the story from a character's perspective, reporters had to immerse themselves in the stories they told, often spending weeks or months with their subjects to reconstruct an accurate depiction. "The idea was to give the full objective description, plus something that readers had always had to go to novels and short stories for: namely, the subjective or emotional life of the characters" (Wolfe, 1973, p. 21). Through this lens, an author gives readers a window into a world they probably haven't experienced. Thus, the subjects in works of literary journalism aren't portrayed as those who have a distant problem in a far away land but rather as someone or something familiar readers can identify with, a strategy derived from the advice of journalist Lincoln Stephens. Characters whose lifestyles are unfamiliar or alien, even those lifestyles that a culture abhors, can relate when authors write from a subjective perspective. Historically, literary writers in all genres have used their own subjectivity in order to understand the subjectivity of their subjects (Hartsock, 2000). This concept

mirrors the ability of myth to create meaning by using familiar components from which readers can derive cultural meanings.

Further informing the subjectivist approach as applicable to literary journalism, Wolfe (1973) writes that literary elements fuel the engine that propels the concept of realism in literature. These elements serve to establish a connection with the reader's own experiences, perceptions, etc., thus making the account more salient, relevant, and believable for the reader. This is especially true as writers of literary journalism tend to focus on the facets of everyday life in their work. Wolfe credits fiction writers such as Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Joyce, Mann, and Faulkner as practitioners of realism, which made their works, among other things, emotionally powerful (p. 33-34). Thus, examining reality and conveying the author's perceptions and a story's emotional elements are a valid way to construct a piece of literary journalism and a method that should not discredit the form for crafting an accurate story designed for engagement.

The third-person point of view, which is prevalent in both narrative and newswriting, is theoretically false from a postmodernist perspective because a narrative is never complete and the author cannot communicate the totality of an event. The omniscient effect from this perspective is achieved because the author seeks to achieve the effect of the all-knowing, all-seeing voice, though a single reporter cannot truly be an all-knowing narrator. Another weakness present in distanced news writing is that it might lack the ability to fully and consistently engage audiences for the duration of the story. Narratives must be inviting to readers and maintain readers' attention (Craig, 2006, p. 24). This reasoning also supports myth in newswriting in that authors seek to utilize

familiar character archetypes and themes in order to make meaning via a universal understanding of the human condition.

Belgrade (1990) notes that critics of literary journalism said that the form invented facts and “distorted reality” (p. 44). Supporters said that the form was more accurate than traditional journalism, as it did not rely on official sources. More often than not, ordinary people were the focal points of stories, and the dominant agenda of those in power was not often perpetuated but challenged in such stories. Authors, such as Gay Talese, argued that though the genre was a different kind of journalism, it was still journalism (Belgrade, 1990, p. 44-46). To demonstrate this concept, Belgrade examined the work of three early pioneers of literary journalism, Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, and Joan Didion. He concluded that all three stayed true to accuracy but also used subjective techniques in their finished works that illuminated their own perspectives and those of their subjects. The result is “multifaceted portraits of characters” that are expressed from their point of view. “Thus, in the end, the locus of responsibility for the reports settles where it belongs — on the authors” (p. 104). Authors who incorporate their subjectivities are likely incorporating mythic elements to craft characters and their struggles. Lule (2001) stated it best when he wrote: “Although storytelling is a subjective, creative exercise, news is not fiction, and news is not false. News does not fail from a lack of objectivity. News fails from a lack of good storytelling” (p. 190).

Emotion in writing as evidence of myth. As the news media searches for a strategy to attract readers and readers search for interesting content amid a sea of information, Fuller (2010) identifies emotion as a way to create a connection between

reader and text. More specifically it is a way to incite natural human biological forces that indicate emotional elements deserve the most attention (p. 49; p. 70). Fuller notes that research indicates that emotion appeals to instinctual reactions often trump the brain's reasoning function. This concept illuminates why emotion in writing would possess so much power, which is not a strategy alien to writers. Storytellers have used this technique to engage readers for centuries. Biblical stories of compassion, Shakespeare's tragic plays, and the touching narratives that emerged after the fall of the World Trade Center all focus on the power of emotion. Like myth, it doesn't matter the century. Emotion in storytelling has power in the human mind.

An important facet of literary journalism and feature writing is emotion. Shapiro (2006) argues that "emotional appeal is still at the heart of literary journalism" and defines emotional appeal as how well a "vehicle of myth functions" (p. 43). According to a 2012 Pulitzer study, anecdotal leads and other non-inverted pyramid leads constituted 93.8 percent and 6.2 percent of feature stories respectively. The author also discovered a prominent usage of literary devices including, "personalized story-telling and widespread invocation of emotion" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012, p. 12). The researcher operationalized the concept of emotionality by examining the lead types in each category. Thus, by examining these two studies, the prevalence of emotionality likely indicates a strong presence of mythic elements.

A 2012 study found that a strategic ritual of emotionality exists in Pulitzer Prize-winning stories via a coding scheme that examined lead types, storytelling strategies, and how affect was expressed. This study found that journalists do not express their own

emotions but those of their sources. Sources were considered to be “saddened” as they navigated a “dangerous and frightening world” (Wahl-Jorgensen, p. 10).

Myth is a vessel through which emotion can be channeled. The emotions experienced by the character in the story can arouse a similar reaction in the reader. “Myth is often more concerned with communicating an emotional response to a perception than it is with communicating the perception itself” by making an “emotive” use of language (Sykes, 1970, p. 7). Emotive language is defined as a statement that is “used for the sake of the effects on emotion and attitude produced by the reference it occasions” (p. 7). This means that the language is chosen purely on the emotional sentiments it can potentially evoke.

Fuller (2005) argues that emotion increases the likelihood that an individual will remember an experience. Each day, media consumers are bombarded by an increasing number of competing information sources. The brain copes with this dilemma by reallocating its focus and resources toward emotionally charged content. This reaction is caused by basic survival instincts according to Fuller, though not everyone at all times is susceptible to emotional cues. Fuller reports that the media, like Shakespeare, are aware of this human reaction and are modifying their coverage and content accordingly.

The human mind, just as the storyteller does, seeks to create order from chaos and organize bits and pieces of information into a coherent whole, as myth does. Stories are an emotional explanation of life and contain universal themes that we use to understand and create meaning from a narrative. Relating emotion to writing, Iglesias (2005) classifies visceral emotions as emotions readers most often identify with. These emotions

also inform the emotional theme of a story. These include “interest, curiosity, anticipation, tension, surprise, feat, excitement, laughter, etc.” (p. 16). Fuller (2010) discusses similar emotional categories but argues that such categories are not representative of the entire emotional perspective; he also notes that emotion in writing does not concern categorizing emotions, just that an emotional connection is made between author and reader and that the emotional element, whatever that might be, is present. Iglesias (2005) argues that an effective story relies heavily on the ability of emotions to adhere to a universal framework. Any subject, simple or complex, can be addressed as long as an audience can relate to a story’s emotional element, as they must be able to relate to myth.

Craig (2006) notes that in a practical sense, the writer does not have to overload a story with weighty emotional sentences to convey an emotion, or as Richard E. Meyer, the narrative editor at The New York Times said, the story could appear as a “soap opera” or a distortion of truth (Craig, p. 168). Meyer said that emotional truth of a story is different for everyone because everyone will experience what a writer has written differently. Thus measuring a writer’s intent would be a faulty way to come to an understanding about the mythic elements present in a piece. Craig writes that the emotional experiences in a story are personal and that if a writer attempts to force an emotional experience on a reader that experiences something differently, the emotional reality will have less of an impact. Jack Hart (2007), manager at the Oregonian, said that “you can’t tell someone to be emotional.” Possibly then, creating emotional copy is something that occurs but is something that cannot be precisely defined in process or

product. It seems the only observation that can be made is that writers intentionally implement techniques to make stories emotional or they are not.

The way emotion is woven into a narrative story is often subtly and is usually shown and not told. The emotional power of a story isn't derived from sentences the writer produces to make the reader feel a certain way about the subject matter, rather it emerges through sentence length, detail, "detailed description, vivid verbs, careful changes in cadence, and judicious usage of the subjects' voices" (Craig, 2006, p. 164). When narratives are written in chaptered segments, elements must be utilized to encourage the reader to continue to read the next chapter or to the end of the story. Such elements, according to 1998 Pulitzer feature winner Thomas French (2007), include a "irresistible main character," "great moments" or detailed scenes, "memorable snatches of dialogue," "surprise turns in the plot," or unexpected complications, "chronology" or structure and the story's "frame" or central theme — elements that concern the mythic components analyzed in this study. French argues that "people care about the facts that appear in the newspaper because of the river of emotion that runs beneath. Emotion is essential" (p. 219). Perhaps then, myth and emotion are one and the same, and the presence of one is a strong indicator of the other's existence.

Media frames and myth working in tandem. This study borrows rationale from the theory of framing to support the presence of myth in journalism. Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ganem (1991) defined a frame as "...a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration" (p. 11). Frames and

myth are both foundational structuring devices that authors use to build the details of their stories. Both are also responsible for creating meaning in a text.

Entman (1993) argues that “framing consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text” (p. 51). According to Entman, frames “define problems,” “diagnose causes,” “make moral judgments,” and “suggest remedies” (p. 52). These aspects are abilities that myth serves as well, particularly evidenced in how characters overcome complications and the consequences that result from their actions (Scarborough, 1994). Both could be used as a way to gauge a society’s moral judgments. Such characteristics are likely to be present in Pulitzer Prize winning feature stories because of those stories’ tendencies to focus on negative issues and their subjectively informed constructions.

According to Entman (1993), frames have four locations in the communications process: communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture; realms that myth could also occupy as well, though myth is often most evident in texts. This study focuses on Entman’s “text,” or feature story, where elements are incorporated into stories as evidenced by the “presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.” Such elements, often correlating to literary devices in narrative storytelling, provide strong clues to the frames and mythic qualities a story produces. Such judgments are proliferated throughout a culture and imbed themselves in the works of most journalism, including literary journalism. Both can also convey cultural values (Bird and Dardenne, 1988; Lule, 2001; Van Gorp, 2010).

Frames elevate aspects of a piece of information, or make certain aspects more salient, a concept Entman (1993) defines as “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (p. 53). A message with elevated salience increases the likelihood that the reader will grasp the meaning, evaluate it, and comprehend it. “Placement,” “repetition,” and association with “culturally familiar symbols” are elements within a text that can increase its salience, as can a frame that correlates with a reader’s previously held belief (Entman, 1993; Johnson-Cartee, 2005).

Price, Tewksbury, and Powers (1997, p. 26) argue that journalists are a part of the society that creates frames, and thus the pervasive societal and cultural themes of that society are used in the formation of the frame in news, just as journalists “mend” myth with the cultural values of their audience (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Both are utilized and manipulated by the cultures that wield them. The concept of cultural hegemony builds on previous studies discussed and suggests that reporters are a part of the audiences they serve and are thus subject to the same cultural perspectives, ideologies, and expectations as their audiences are. Specifically, most reporters operate within the perspective of the American ideology, so the frames embedded within their stories will likely mirror the perspective that is pervasive in a certain time and place (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 175). This function is one myth can perform as well.

There are competing ideas that are innately present within individuals at any given time. As authors utilize a specific myth, authors might intentionally use a frame to illicit a response from readers. This argument seeks to establish that frames are not all-powerful engines but that they do influence and direct the thoughts of the receiver of the

information (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997). Johnson-Cartee (2005) succinctly states that “the power of frames subtly induces us to filter our perceptions of the world in particular ways; they make some aspects of our reality more noticeable than other aspects” (p. 300). Similarly, myth utilizes certain portrayals based on how a culture perceives the world and can affect how the reader perceives certain information.

American journalists employ familiar mythic elements in their portrayals. Researchers identified that religion, death, and suffering were popular vehicles for Pulitzer-winning feature writers, and thus illustrates the mythic components discovered have a high likelihood of correlating with those subjects. “Cultural forms such as science, religion, history, and journalism organize experience by providing a particular perspective or ‘frame’ for seeing and knowing the world, and by establishing conventions and standards of expectation for communicating knowledge” (Eason, 1981, p. 143). Such cultural ideals operate like language in that they are embedded in institutions and habits of a society and because of their enculturation, become unquestioned lenses through which people view and make sense of the world.

Journalists use frames to construct information in a familiar context that audiences understand (p. 161-162). Going further, Ettema and Glasser (1988) cite that incorporating frames into a story is a part of mastering the craft of storytelling. A frame is selected based on its appropriateness and prior success as a process. Its ability to create meaning and understanding from information are also criteria that are used in an author’s frame selection. Schon (1983) proposed the concept of “logic of affirmation” in which reporters seek sources and information that will fit the frame they wish to use. Similarly

journalists could construct myth based on previous exposure to stories that have utilized similar plots, characters, themes, etc., and the idea that certain mythic elements prevail throughout time could contribute to the idea that those myths were successful and effective. Reporters could use information gathered during the reported process and organize it to fit the myth they wish to use as a structuring device for the narrative.

Components of myth. One element mentioned earlier that governs myth is archetype. Lule defines archetypes as “original figures or frameworks, powerful patterns, models to imitate and adapt” (p. 30). Such a concept stems from a major contributor to myth, a concept Bird and Dardenne (1988) call “resonance,” which correlates to “the feeling that we have written or read the same stories over and over again.” Though stories actually vary greatly, they are “encoded into existing frameworks” making them implicitly similar (p. 72-73). Lytle (1959) argues that studying structure in writing reveals myth. Although journalists discredit this perspective and claim that each story is separate from the meta-narrative of myth, they are blind to the overarching structures that govern the construction of their stories.

News values also form the basis of these frameworks, which serve to dramatize narratives. News values are institutionalized “rules and formulas” that reporters rely on to construct their stories. Because of limited time in which journalists have to report and write stories and journalists’ tendency to be working with many different subjects simultaneously, they might systematically rely on story-telling tools as a “skeleton on which to hang the flesh of the news story” (Bird & Dardenne, 1988, p. 73). In short,

while the details of a story are often forgotten, their basic structures are remembered and continuously implemented.

Archetypes are the structures embedded within texts, which authors use as “scaffolding” to structure their stories. Complication, action, and resolution form the plot (Franklin, 1986, p. 85), a major component in Booker’s (2004) opus to mythic story sequencing, *The Seven Basic Plots*. Booker argues that similarities in plot exists in stories spanning from the oral traditions of ancient Greek folklore to modern cinema to daily conversations to news and myths. He defines stories as “structured sequences of imagery.” We are able to envision people, places and things as well as fictional anomalies and this ability enables us to construct a series of events in which these elements are manifested into scenes that construct “mental patterns” or stories (p. 2-4). Booker identifies a pattern underlying each of the seven plot archetypes he discusses, which interplay among a series of problems and solutions that culminate in a final resolution of the overarching complication. Repeatedly, throughout the history of storytelling, Booker affirms that it was possible to see this same theme, of a hero or heroine being drawn into a course of action which leads initially to some kind of gratification and dream-like success but then darkens inexorably to a climax of nightmare and destruction (p. 4). Such archetypes would then progress toward some resolution, one which Pulitzer-winner Jon Franklin identifies as typically happy in effective stories, an idea that mirrors the structures of myth. Negative endings, according to Franklin (1994), have little value for readers, so he recommends that conclusions be structured to convey something positive.

One way stories can do this, he says, is to teach lessons about how characters navigate life's problems (p. 81).

Story archetypes are not rigid or entirely separate categories. Booker (2004) notes that the seven basic plots overlap, multiple plot archetypes can comprise one story, and the characters who are involved also share similarities. These plots comprise the very foundation of storytelling that storytellers cannot deviate from them, according to Booker. Booker cites the ethnological research of Adolf Bastian who posited that the similarities between stories resulted from natural dispositions within the human brain based on what he called "elemental ideas" (p. 11). Booker also references Freud's concept of the unconscious as a means from which myths and folklore derived their stories. This idea posits that human minds are similar and that the unconscious is a subliminal guiding force in story creation, what Carl Jung identified as "archetypes" (p. 12). Most importantly Booker argues that "all kinds of story, however profound or however trivial, ultimately spring from the same source, are shaped around the same basic patterns, and are governed by the same hidden, universal rules" (p. 13).

Booker's seven plot archetypes are: "The monster and the thrilling escape from death," "rags to riches," "the quest," "voyage and return," "comedy," "tragedy," and "rebirth." The Pulitzer stories examined will not be assessed for how closely they correlate with these structures. Rather, these plots will be used as guides to identify problems and resolutions, as well as central characters, their actions, and the resulting consequences of those choices.

Stories are structure. Atkinson (1995) builds on this by writing that they “show us that the protagonists’ actions and reactions are due as much to choice as they are the circumstance” (p. 26). The stages and inner workings of these archetypes are a basis for this research in order to link character and action.

Another method that is particularly useful for identifying plot and character actions is Franklin’s (1994) outlining method for crafting an effective story, one that he demonstrates using his 1979 Pulitzer Prize-winning feature story *Mrs. Kelly’s Monster* as an example. He begins with a complication — which is simply a problem a person encounters that “triggers a situation” — followed by a series of developments, and finally a resolution that “destroys tension” (p. 72). Each stage is crafted using a subject, action verb, and an object. Using Franklin’s (p. 127) story as an example, this researcher will outline other winning Pulitzer feature stories using Franklin’s “formula”:

Complication: Ducker gambles life

Development:

1. Ducker enters brain
2. Ducker clips aneurysm
3. Monster ambushes Ducker

Resolution: Ducker accepts defeat

Franklin notes another important aspect of this formula in that it shows a relationship between “character, situation, and action,” action being the connection between the actor and what occurs (p. 72). Complications, which can be external or internal, create “tension” and “suspense.” To find complications, Franklin recommends

looking for “action” and asking why a character did something (p. 74). Examining narrative further, it “is telling a story, building suspense, putting your characters (and the reader) into a situation, then taking him through it, complete with emotional involvements, to a resolution. It’s not changing facts, but arranging them. It is plotting” (Berner, 1986, p. 8).

Berner notes that while chronology can make a story dramatic, other structures can contribute to achieve this effect. Thus, this study employs a more than one perspective in order to understand mythic components within feature stories. This study will utilize this approach in identifying complications or problems characters face and how they overcome them as a way to understand character archetypes, in addition to using this outline as a guide to understand how the structures of these stories can be informed by the seven plot archetypes provided by Booker (2004).

Lule offers a list of mythic archetypes he has classified based on “three decades of reading, writing, editing and studying the news” (p. 22). Although he does not claim it to be exhaustive, he argues that these seven archetypes commonly occur in news stories of the thousands that Atkinson (1995) say prevail in modern culture. Thus, these news myths will be used as a guide when identifying archetypal figures in the texts. Lule’s seven myths driven by character are “the victim,” “the scapegoat,” “the hero,” “the good mother,” “the trickster,” “the other world,” and “the flood” (p. 23-25).

These “master myths” were derived from news stories that served as case studies for the theoretical implications news myths in Lule’s book. The scholar applied these ancient mythic stories and archetypal characters to modern figures. This approach will be

used as a guide for examining myth in the sample texts, by referring to Franklin's (1994) outlining technique and Booker's (2004) plot archetypes.

Further supporting this strategy is Burke's (1969) *Grammar of Motives* and Aristotle's (2000) *Poetics*. Four of Aristotle's central components of tragedy are: theme (what the story means), plot (the events that progress the story), language, and character. Burke takes these categories further and devises a pentad of concepts that mirror the 5 Ws and H of newswriting. Borrowing Burke's agent, "who did it;" act, "what was done;" and agency "how he did it," will aid in answering the research questions posited during the analysis process and strengthen the framework of this study (1969).

Archetypal figures. Stemming from archetypal plots and news myths are characters or archetypal figures who are the actors in stories, or Burke's (1969) "who," Aristotle's (2000) "character," and the subject of five of Lule's (2001) news myths. Knight and Dean's (1982) study analyzed how groups and characters, both central components of myth, were portrayed and described in two journalistic texts. This study will mirror that effort. The researchers found that journalists often pitted opposing factions at odds with each other, portraying them as villains battling heroes and perpetrators plaguing victims (p. 151). In addition, descriptions of figures in stories are often "realized readily" and their "moral purpose and character" inferred via abstract, not concrete, portrayals of a story's subject matter. Myth also served as a moral guide for the reader, and differentiated between right and wrong, good and bad as one side was pitted against the other to maintain a theme of conflict (p. 158-159).

The narrative form provides a consistent architecture and framework journalists use to construct their stories. Journalists writing in the narrative form often use the plight of a single character who readers can relate, which likely increases empathy and the field of believability for the reader. Myth is “concrete and particular” in that it involves certain individuals that audiences can identify with and “respond emotionally to them,” responses that abstractions do not elicit (Sykes, 1970, p. 19). The myth of the hero is one of the most prominent myths in American culture, as it has endured for decades and is a widely understood concept. From literary journalism’s inception until the present, the portrayal of the American hero has mostly resisted change and has remained largely unaltered (Shapiro, 2006, p. 100).

2003 Pulitzer feature-winner Sonia Nazario unknowingly indicated the presence of mythic portrayals in her Pulitzer-winning feature story and cited that the story follows a central character that readers can sympathize with and conveys a universal theme, a young boy in search of his mother. Nazario said during the extensive and time-intensive editing process, her central purpose was “getting readers to understand, empathize with, and invest in the main character” (Nazario, 2007, p. 208-211).

Journalists often “personalize” such stories in order to assign the story of greater “importance” to readers because of “consequence” or the possibility that the events in the story might affect their lives. When those criteria are met, readers are more likely to judge the story and the events and people within the story as “significant” (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 127). Such personalization might be evidence of authors placing myth within a cultural context.

Theme. As outlined previously, hero and event are the two basic elements of myth. Those two concepts are also governed by theme. Kuypers (2010) defined a theme as “the subject of discussion, or that which is the subject of the thought expressed” (p. 302). Theme communicates “accepted values and plots” and answers the question: “What is the story about?” (Moore & Lamb, 2005, p. 49-51).

Both myth and theme connect story elements to a larger cohesive entirety, work to create meaning for readers, adhere to an organizational structure, are pervasive throughout a culture, and are widely understood. Such themes will be noted during this research as needed to understand how they relate to the mythic components discovered. Themes and lessons in stories should reveal how Pulitzer feature stories define and indoctrinate the American perspective. Theme is present in all works of journalism as evidenced in a study by Pan and Ksicki (1993) which argued that “every news story has a theme that functions as the central organizing idea” that “connects different semantic elements of a story (e.g. descriptions of an action or an actor, quotes of sources, and background information) into a coherent whole” (p. 58-59). In connecting this idea to myth, Atkinson (1995) writes that by using familiar story structures, the point of the story is easily understood. Consequently, audiences are more likely to derive meaning from stories told in mythic frameworks (p. 22). Bird and Dardenne (1988) argue that in order for a myth to maintain its power, it must be retold. Thus themes that prevail serve as a story’s framework and are adapted to the culture and society that implements them (p. 72). If a culture applies variations to the basic story of Cinderella, we recognize the story

as Cinderella because it's basic framework is embedded within our culture. When the details are peeled away, the theme remains.

Wolfe notes that universal themes emerge from stories, and these themes connect readers with the narrative's emotional heart: fear, triumph, remorse, jubilation, pity, etc. As such, themes of narrative works of journalism can be reduced to a few words, as can the dominant emotional sentiment of a story (Wolfe, 2007, p. 154). Jon Franklin (2007) suggests that "there is another layer below the factual and the emotional. It is the rhythm of the piece and evokes the story's universal theme: love endures, wisdom prevails, children mature, war destroys, prejudice perverts" (p. 110).

The media has often been criticized for focusing a majority of its coverage on negative themes. Perhaps the old adage, "if it bleeds, it leads," is derived from the prevalence of negativity in news. In Moore and Lamb's (2005) study of Pulitzer-winning features, the researchers noted that stories focused heavily on negative emotional themes, such as despair or "outrage," and few stories that utilized positive themes, though stories after 2005 remain unanalyzed (p. 49). But just what were those themes? And have the seven most recent stories deviated from those findings? How does myth interplay with these thematic elements? These questions will be answer in Chapter 5.

Johnson-Cartee (2005) argues that negativity fuels the stories that attract journalists; Fuller (2010) notes that "negative events are more emotionally powerful than positive events." Such research and assertions would explain why children are more engaged with fairy tales and ghost stories with negative themes just as adults are fascinated with car wrecks involving strangers (Fuller, p. 78-79). Fuller likens this idea of

attraction to carnal emotions to the basic human instinct of fleeing from danger, as our primitive ancestors likely experienced when sighting a large predator. Thus, our emotions are based on instinct and that is why the human mind is naturally drawn to emotionally charged content. So what of Pulitzer feature stories? How is this negativity, if it still is pervasive, portrayed within the myths in these stories? Chapter 5 also addresses these inquiries.

Ailments, fatal disease, accidents, and tragedy are prime fodder for the front pages of newspapers. Shapiro (2006) argues that this has created a sub-genre of narrative journalism that battle for hard news for the front pages of newspapers (p. 52). She defines these stories as “human interest stories, molded by the techniques of fiction” that possess emotional qualities. Graber (1989) specified that stories containing “violence, conflict, disaster, or scandal” were more likely to be considered newsworthy than stories lacking those generally negative characteristics.

The previously discussed idea of plot versus this concept of theme is a way to separate and analyze myth at work in the conventions of the journalist and in the subject of the story itself.

Other components of myth. There are other elements of myth that scholars have identified to predictably appear in many forms of narrative. Symbols are prevalent in culture and are ascribed various levels of importance and acceptance based on the culture in which they are viewed. Jacobi defines *symbol* as “a sign, object, or thing that binds together two usually very different terms” (Jacobi, 1959, p. 24). An object is often imbued with a meaning or connotation that is prescribed by a culture. Atkinson gives the

example that a dove symbolizes peace. It is immediately apparent that the dove is a bird, but it's connotation with peace is hidden. "Symbols are not merely how people communicate, but are tied to why people communicate" (p. 103). Lule (2001) argues that symbols explain the reason people communicate and are the basis on which myths are formed. Symbols are used in meaning making, but the meaning that is understood is indicative of a particular time and place. This sense of endurance throughout time illustrates how some myths are perpetuated, while others are forgotten. Deep universal meanings are embedded within symbols, derived from cultural interpretations, though symbols also can vary in their meanings; depending on the context in which they are viewed, meanings can become altered over time. The language of symbols and myth should be similar within similar cultures (Waardenburg, 1980).

Atkinson (1995) defines *pattern* as "a design, model, or plan that is repeated over and over again," "regularly" and "predictably." "Separation-initiation-return" and "birth-death-rebirth" are examples of patterns (p. 26).

Repetition is "an aid to our memory" and instrumental in influencing how humans remember things. Repetition helps us make sense of patterns and aids in building familiar story structures. Although stories differ and might deviate from certain patterns, a similar theme or motif tends to reappear among stories (Atkinson, 1995, p. 22).

The elements of myth discussed in this chapter will serve as guides when identifying mythic components.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

Considering the previous literature and the aims of this study, the questions that surfaced encompassed the texts of winning Pulitzer Prize feature stories and the mythic components contained within them.

- 1) What archetypal figures emerge from Pulitzer Prize-winning feature stories? How are they portrayed?
- 2) What problems do characters encounter? How do they overcome, endure, or reconcile the complications? What values and beliefs do characters communicate?
- 3) What overarching themes and subjects are present in the Pulitzer Prize feature stories analyzed?
- 4) What other components of myth (ritual, motif, symbol, etc.) and patterns among stories are present?

Chapter 4: Methodology

Because an authors' use of mythic components is often implicit, this study employs the use of the qualitative approach of a textual analysis in order to unearth mythic components intentionally and unintentionally embedded in the texts by award-winning journalists.

Textual Analysis

Myth, like frames, are a part of “dominant” meanings that serve as scaffolding for a story because such meanings are difficult to resist, which alludes to their pervasiveness as well as their tendency to be embedded within texts (Knight & Dean, 1982). When identified, mythic structures allow readers to easily decode a story's meaning. Thus, a deep textual analysis of the sample is necessary in order to mine mythic elements that comprise Pulitzer feature texts (p. 146-147).

According to Fürsich (2009), the qualitative methodology of textual analysis is designed to unearth a text's “ideological and cultural assumptions” (p. 240). Mirroring past methods used by scholars studying myth and archetypes in journalism, this researcher will mimic their methodological strategies (Berkowitz, 2005; Carey, 1988; Knight & Dean, 1982; Lule, 2001). Fürsich notes that a textual analysis approach is apt for extracting myth and archetype from text because journalists and readers would not have been able to examine or explain the implementation of those components in texts (p. 245). Two reasons for this exist: journalists are more concerned with deadlines and the process reporting and writing stories; readers use news to make meaning and order from

news that presents conflict and chaos (Lule, 2001). Thus, process is not a part of this study because intent cannot be determined from producers if myth was not a component intentionally implemented. Subtle findings in the text can only be discovered utilizing textual analysis. This study is concerned with the intermediate stage between “production and consumption” (Fürsich, 2009, p. 240). This stage is where myth lives.

Additionally, the analysis this study employs isn't concerned with providing an explicitly accurate account of how the text should be interpreted or how many possible interpretations could occur. From the perspective of criticism, this study offers an argument that an audience's worldview will be enhanced if they choose to examine these feature stories as myth. This perspective also acknowledges that there is no “most appropriate” way of analyzing a text or that every viewer assesses the text in the same manner (Dow, 1996, p.4). This study serves as a foundation for future research in myth and feature stories.

In Smith's 1975 study, he defended his project's analysis of rhetoric and language by noting that textual analysis “preserves ... the complexity of language and connotation” (p. 15). In textual analysis, the decision of what to count and what not to count is up to the researcher but that distinction must be defined made clear and justified. Smith says that the researcher should “soak” in the content of a literary analysis to derive representative examples that will undergo an intense analysis. Literary analysis utilizes evidence that points to the interpretation of a text and the material that alters or disproves the research question. Although such an analysis seeks to unearth patterns, those patterns might not be expressed in quantifiable terms and instead rely on “latent meanings”

requiring inferences by the researcher (p. 15). Observations made in this study were supported with examples from the text and arguments from the researcher.

Building further on the concept of rhetoric, Kuypers (2010) defines it as “the strategic use of communication, oral or written, to achieve specifiable goals.” This concept infers that the communicator’s language is intended to be influential in some manner and attempt to have audiences “agree” with them in some fashion, whether that be consciously or subconsciously that a particular “value, action, or policy” has more value than another (p. 288).

A scientific approach to research dictates that the manner in which a study is conducted is based precisely on past studies, the description of the study, and methods used. Such factors are intended to achieve as great a distance from the researcher and subject as possible and ensure that the researcher’s relationship to the study is neutral. Criticism contrasts this concept greatly, as the author’s “personal qualities of the researcher influence what to study, how to study, and why to study a particular instance of rhetoric” (p. 291). Kuypers cites studies steeped in rhetorical criticism that employ varying approaches, where some arrive at new perspectives. Black (1978) mentions that objectifying and placing boundaries on criticism is faulty because the personality of the researcher is of such great importance (Black p. xi, Kuypers, 2010, p. 292). Such an approach is justification for not confining this study to a strict quantitative methodology.

This researcher referred to a strategy for analyzing texts based on another study conducted by Lester-Roushanzamir and Raman (1999). The researchers first defined the text and read it as a whole in various passes for categories derived from the literature.

Second, the articles were read for specific literary elements, such as voice, character, structure, etc., or in the case of this study, archetypes, themes, and other mythic elements and their portrayals. Lastly, the findings were interpreted. This researcher employed a similar process to mine mythic elements from the text.

Also taking methodological cues from Wahl-Jorgensen's 2012 study that assessed Pulitzer stories for emotion, this researcher will also implement techniques at the micro and macro level to answer the research questions posited. Wahl-Jorgensen examined the study at the macro-level about "the nature of narrative" and micro-level in analysis to "particular word choices that shape the discourse" (p. 7). To identify the mythic elements outlined, this researcher must first immerse himself in the text by reading each story in order for additional passes through the text and note details. These details will be used to build larger categories that will serve as a way to connect the myths present in the stories sampled. Using this strategy, one can mine elements that might be otherwise unnoticed.

Additionally, the 2012 Pulitzer emotionality study discovered that the actions and dialogue of characters in news stories serve as a suitable way to understand emotion; similarly, characters should serve as vessels for myth by observing "systematic patterns" (Wahl Jorgensen, p. 8). Another study that examined recurrent themes in mythmaking yielded six categories of themes that were pervasive among the myths examined. The researcher noted that most themes fell into seven categories and that two categories featuring only a few themes were not diminished (Kluckhohn, 1960). Thus the number of examples in the category does not matter, only that the category applies to more than one story. Although not all stories will fall into a particular category, it's the pervasive

similarities among the mythic elements in stories that make such patterns apparent and worth examining.

Specifically in regards to examining myth, Lule (1988) utilized a chart for constructing Burke's pentad and placed each element from the news story into a category. This strategy enabled Lule to analyze components from specific news stories across a larger whole and explore the relationships among items, patterns, and portrayals in different stories. A similar strategy was utilized in this study to categorize the components of myth discovered.

In addition, what characters value and how they resolve their problems will also be implemented into this workflow. Lule's 1988 study also sought to identify themes and examined characters from a dramatic perspective, as this study does using Franklin's dramatic outlining technique. This type of analysis and structuralist approach has been used to assess the mythic properties embedded in stories (Koch, 1990). Royal and Tankard's 2004 case study of an online multi-part narrative story was analyzed based on prior literature and predetermined categories that served as a guide for the research while allowing for new information outside of the categories determined prior to analysis. This technique is particularly suitable for this study. This study utilized a similar approach, placing components in categories, as well as allowing for miscellaneous and unanticipated elements to manifest during analysis.

One such approach for a framing study borrowed from a structuralist approach as well as defined structuralism as "the process in which individuals and groups actively create social reality from different information sources." This order, the scholar argues, is

derived from journalists' "preconceived notions" about elements within the story structure and what meanings those elements take on (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 84). Based on Van Gorp's research, another important consideration when identifying the mythic components is determining the level of abstraction and applicability between stories.

Foss (1983) outlines three guiding principles for assessing the results of a critical study:

1. Symbolic data used to formulate results cannot be assessed scientifically because of its susceptibility to multiple interpretations. If scientific verification is not possible, then justifications for the criticism must be explained (p. 289). Thus, justifications for assertions must be provided and examples from the text will be used in those justifications.

2. Because choice is a primary informant of rhetorical criticism and a heavy influence on a study's framework, such subjectivities dictate varying perspectives of the world. Researchers using this framework must explicate the effects of their choices and identify possible choices. Consequently, researchers cannot present their findings as an absolute truth but as one of many interpretations (p. 291).

3. Rhetorical criticism is viewed as an informant of building theory. Personal perspectives of the researcher influence how the data is interpreted. Such a premise allows the researcher to use a personal perspective to inform, build, and revise the theory that emerges from the text. (Foss, 1983; Kuypers, 2010). How the theoretical framework is utilized must be based in logic and reason, including "internal aspects (how the rhetorical artifact is described) and external aspects (the form or theory itself)" (Kuypers,

2010, p. 294) Still, the data should be adaptable to an established theory, as this study is built on the theories of myth and framing.

Kuypers (2010) posits that rhetorical criticism in framing isn't required to follow a blueprint but should present a clear explanation of how the study was conducted and how the results were determined (p. 298). The specifics of how this study was conducting are outlined in previous chapters and justification for utilizing those approaches were explained as well.

Sample

The 33 Pulitzer-winning feature entries since 1979 serves as the purposive sample from which stories were selected. In order to complete this study in a semester and make multiple passes through each story, this researcher selected 15 of the most recent entries to analyze from 1997 to 2012, as a portion of these stories have not been a part of many research studies. No prize for feature stories was awarded in 2004.

Another study conducted within a semester assessed magazine feature stories for their temporal qualities and used 12 stories that served as examples for the researcher's text-based analysis (Wooock, 2012). More samples would simply mean more examples in each category and would not necessarily indicate the discovery of new categories.

Drawing from the most recent and current examples of mythmaking in newspaper features, this sample size cannot be generalized to a larger population of writers but can only represented as examples the mythic elements present in Pulitzer features and how they were portrayed in these winning stories. For this study, the best sample is purposive

and thus its aim “is on understanding and illuminating important cases rather than on generalizing from a sample to a population” (Patton, 1999, p. 1197).

Wahl-Jorgensen (2012) notes that while an analysis of Pulitzer winners might not illustrate what is “typical” or account for the “diversity” of journalistic practices worldwide, such a sample does serve to show what the field lauds as “exemplary” and what models practitioners strive to “emulate.” (p. 6) This researcher consulted what the institution journalism deemed excellent works of feature writing and determined that Pulitzer feature stories were among the best in the field as determined by the institution of journalism.

Two of the stories, *Enrique’s Journey* and *Angels and Demons*, were not assessed for their entire plot structures because of their length, which were hundreds of thousands of words — book length. The first chapter of *Enrique’s Journey* and the first three chapters of *Angels and Demons* were assessed for all other elements; the word count of both narratives mirrored the average length of other samples and supplied enough material suitable for answering the research questions.

Chapter 5: Findings

Myth was discovered to be a primary force within the feature stories assessed and was determined to heavily influence how people, places, things, and issues were depicted. Feature stories are a journalistic genre often overlooked in previous myth research. This researcher found that authors' subjectivities concerning reconstructed moments, the inclusion of certain details, and the language describing characters were primary contributors to how those elements seemed to influence the mythic properties identified. Characters mirrored archetypal figures and acted as central vessels through which a story's mythic aspects were revealed. Characters' future actions often became predictable based on the archetype they embodied.

Utilizing concepts discussed in Chapter 2, this researcher found that archetypes correlating with Lule's (2001) news myths, Booker's (2004) basic plots, and Franklin's (1994) dramatic outlining structure illustrated that characters and their actions were at the core of each story. Lule (2001) categorized seven news myths, five of which character make character the central component. Most of these character types were at odds with some force in these stories, which could indicate that stories that rely on strong binary forces of right and wrong or good and evil, which are inherently a part of conflict, are more likely to win awards. Although most stories were similar in some way to the proposed categories, types of myth, and structuring, these stories warranted additional subcategories. Other components not anticipated prior to analysis — mythic abilities, religious motifs, sacred place, extremes and rarities — emerged after the coding and

grouping process; the most pervasive, strongest, and identifiable examples are discussed as exemplars of the category that emerged. These categories and others will be explained in detail later in this chapter. The stories referenced within this chapter are listed in the Appendix of this study located on page 143.

This researcher found that characters' choices influenced plot and determined the course of the story. These choices and actions were integral to categorizing these characters as a certain archetype in relation to how they navigated a dilemma. Characters' decisions had great influence on how they were expected to be portrayed based on previously identified archetypes. Characters typically fit into one archetype their traits were similar across the archetypal category discovered in these stories. It seemed as though their actions and the outcomes of those actions could be predicted based on the archetype category they mirrored most. Taking this further, the archetypal figure categories were not found to be rigid based on the sample consulted, and sometimes characters were transformed or underwent a metamorphosis, internally or externally during the narrative, which made them correlate more closely with another archetype rather than the original one they embodied. Most often, this occurred when victims took on hero-like qualities, which could be viewed as a lesson to readers in how to overcome adversity. This could also be viewed as a way authors reinforce the expectations of the outcomes of characters who act in a certain manner. Persistence and external strength were prominent values these heroes exhibited. This rebirth, or metamorphosis, usually was initiated internally and in turn, characters exhibited positive actions based on their internal transformations. The 2009 winning story about a child who is severely neglected,

is an example that illustrates this prevalence of metamorphosis or rebirth. During the story, the child is taught how to become human as the neglect has left her extremely unsocialized. She learns how to cry, use the restroom, communicate with others, etc. Despite her afflicted state, two parents choose to adopt her. The author described the day her foster parents adopted her as the moment she was really born, which again emphasizes this aspect that rebirth or transformation is symbolic or metaphorical (DeGregory, 2009).

Lule's news myths provided a valuable way to discuss and code archetypal figures and their characteristics. Booker's plot structures were valuable in connecting concepts of myth with story structure and plot. Franklin's dramatic outlining structure provided a way to identify conflict and resolution, problems and solutions, and character choices. Unlike hard news stories that often require a quick turn-around, these feature stories were carefully crafted and had a major complication that was woven throughout the beginning, middle, and end of the narrative.

Endings, an integral part of myth and narrative, were vital to each story as they provided closure, even if the major problem still loomed after the last word. Although not always happy endings as the way scholars describe how most myths end, resolutions in these stories brought a sense of closure to the story. This was achieved when characters were depicted as undergoing a metamorphosis or coming to some realization that brought a sense of closure. If an ending was negative, a satisfying conclusion was often achieved when characters learned lessons and seemed to be better off than when they first battled the major complication. Specifically, lessons of acceptance and diversity could be said to

be central agents in some of these stories, particularly the 2007 winning entry about an immigrant imam that sought for his congregation to be accepted in America or in the 2001 winning story about a boy who elected to undergo risky surgery to remove a facial deformity. While life goes on for sources, authors must provide some sort of closure for the characters in the story. This idea illustrates that closure is constructed by authors for the sake of the narrative.

One of these categories, religious motifs, was prominent across many of the mythic categories identified, which might allude to the strong emphasis American culture places on religion. Faith could be an avenue these authors use to mend ancient myths with the lessons taught in religious texts. These references were found in quotes by characters and authors' descriptions. Sacred places were given a religious significance, as well as symbols that represented a religious deity. Death and dying in addition to recurring themes and elements of finality were often seen from a religious perspective, which could suggest that Americans use religion as a way to cope with loss — in story and in reality. Authors seemed willing to quote religious sources verbatim or place religious references throughout the story, which could be a sign that religion in American culture is so pervasive that it is an integral aspect of some of the best works of American feature writing.

Wahl-Jorgensen (2012) found that authors use character as a way to assess how emotion is incorporated into journalistic works. This research found, too, that characters were used as mythic vessels to communicate certain beliefs and values. These choices and their consequences could be said to illuminate what American culture deems right

and wrong, particularly hard work, persistence, duty to family, adherence to religion, and passion for profession. Also, some examples countered Moore and Lamb's (2005) findings that most characters were of the Christian faith: in this study, one central character was a Muslim imam and two others were of the Mormon faith. This could reflect that those of a minority religious affiliation are becoming more interesting subjects for these stories because of the increased resistance they experience from American society. These stories also used unusual, extreme, or rare instances that could be viewed as avenues authors use to make stories more appealing or dramatic.

In stories of loss, typically a strong emphasis on family togetherness was broken, and this caused characters to experience internal torment. This dissolution of family served as a major complication and could be interpreted that American culture values family and mends these ancient myths with that of a family bond — when those connections are broken, tragedy ensues. Unmarried couples with children and single parents were pervasive examples; there was one same-sex couple. These non-traditional family types were frequently identified in stories, which could suggest that how family is defined is more important than what is thought of being the “traditional American family.” Perhaps it is also a reflection and acknowledgement that family is sacred and a common bond humans share and understand across time and cultural boundaries.

Heroes, one of the most enduring archetypes in narrative, served as the ideal exemplars of success. Their actions were celebrated and their example served as a definition for “greatness.” Heroes typically have humble beginnings, which they transcend, eventually embark on a journey to triumph over an obstacle, and then finally

“return,” a structure that mirrors Booker’s (2004) pentad structure of the plot of “The Quest.” Other archetypal figures also go on journeys as they attempt to resolve the complications they encounter.

According to Lule, victims are often innocent characters who experience tragic events where events take a negative turn with possible life-threatening consequences. Victims are portrayed as unable to cope with the adversity they encounter, which supports the notion that such archetypal figures are innocent casualties of a cruel world.

Other archetypal figures were discovered as well. Scapegoats, those who contrast society’s ideals, and tricksters, typically deviant characters whose actions result in their own self-destruction, were also present. Scapegoats served their mythic purpose as being the center of blame in these stories. Tricksters were the “dark forces” that the good forces strove to overcome. The Good Parent, which emphasized a connection between paternal roles and children, was a prominent archetypal figure as well. These characters sometimes took on characteristics of the hero; often, though, the maternal figure was paternal in stories where the father was the primary caretaker as a result of a divorce. Thus, the archetype was refined as “The Good Parent.”

A new category, “The Monster,” was discovered during the analysis; monsters were personified natural forces or invasive medical problems that awakened and sought to consume victims. The monster either defeated the victim or the victim overcame the monster and emerged as hero.

“The Savior” was another archetype that emerged when characters were given qualities of a Biblical liberator with little context given about their past because of their

prominence in American culture. This alludes that readers' preconceived notions were used to build upon the "legend" of these well-known figures. Examples and variations of these archetypes will be discussed as well as how they were depicted.

The prevalence of conflict, suffering, certain archetypal figures, religion, family, extremes, and rarities could suggest that Pulitzer stories must contain these elements and portray them in a certain manner for a journalistic feature to be considered award-winning. These feature stories that rely on these major elements could be said to be extremely emotional and dramatic, and consequently more effective at engaging readers, a central function not usually indicative of other genres of journalism. Endings were integral to distinguishing these stories from most other genres of journalism. Features stories, like myths, must have a beginning, middle, and end. This observation likely means that feature stories and subjective writing depend heavily on the elements of myth to form the structures of these award-winning stories, possibly more so than other types of journalism.

These stories contained many direct and paraphrased quotes from sources. In this regard, either the source or the journalist was the source for the language in the text, so this could suggest that journalists recognize myths conveyed by sources as effective storytelling tools and then incorporate those myths into their work. Readers could then consume and internalize these myths, which would reinforce a myth's effectiveness because it is perpetuated as part of this cycle of telling and consuming stories. Still, whatever the source of myth in this instance, it could be argued that the journalist has the

ultimate power of portrayal as they are the architects of these stories and are the primary forces mending and implementing these mythic components.

The overall patterns found among these 15 stories sampled could also be an indicator that the components perpetuated in these stories are prevalent among the entire body of work in the Pulitzer Prizes and not relegated only to the feature category. The portrayals of plot and character in these stories could also be viewed as dramatized versions of reality that journalists create in order to win awards. It was observed that authors emphasized the most compelling or interesting moments in a story and selected subjects that readers might find shocking or surprising. By awarding Pulitzers to certain stories, journalism might define certain mythic elements as crucial to crafting an effective long-form story. Using certain components and portraying them in a particular way might be a major contributor to winning the distinction of being Pulitzer worthy.

The Hero

In all but one story, there were apparent heroes in each of the 15 Pulitzer Prize winning feature stories analyzed. Heroes generally took on severable positive characteristics. In the “hero-less” story, all characters committed acts that were not exemplary of the typical righteous quality heroes supposedly possess. Most were professionals or experts at their chosen professions and were sometimes victims’ only hope of survival or freedom. Heroes valued hard work and had dedication to occupation or duty. They were willing to take on difficult tasks because of personal and professional convictions and were stoic and were able to tackle daunting obstacles. Heroes in these stories were portrayed as having strong emotional exteriors. Sometimes victims

transitioned from being in a weak state to one of strength in that they were portrayed as internally strong individuals who refused to succumb to their afflictions, which transformed them into heroes.

In these stories, most heroes were men. Frequently, women who were heroes began stories as victims. Also, the occupations of heroes were involved with required great physical strength and endurance were valued or were portrayed as wielding power that could influence the fate of other characters. They were military personnel, police, rescue workers, medical professionals, judges, world-class musicians, and adoptive parents, to name a few. Some were community leaders, which served as an example for right and wrong for their respective community. Although heroes were given special power, they did not abuse that power to make others suffer. Heroes also had the ability to represent a group and influence perceptions about how the group is portrayed, such as a prominent Islamic religious figure who communicated to his people how they should react to oppression, an action that also made this character parallel a “savior.” The savior character type and another more explicit example discovered will be discussed later (Elliott, 2007).

Heroes sacrificed to help others. When heroes empathized with Hartsock’s (2000) the “Other” in their encounters with other suffering characters, they experienced grief, but often did not outwardly emote in public. Grieving and internal pain was communicated as a private matter for heroes, as they served to be emotionally strong for those who were grieving around them. This observation could be viewed as evidence that American culture demonstrates that grieving is a private matter, particularly for the male

gender as outward emotion could be construed as a sign of weakness. This observation supports the mythic typicality that heroes are strong, physically and emotionally.

Heroes in these stories were humble and were portrayed as people who encountered complications and are described as ordinary people. This could be an effort by the authors to make characters relatable to an audience so that their actions and abilities don't appear too fantastical. For example Joshua Bell, one of the most talented musicians in the world, is described in the first line of the story as wearing a long-sleeved shirt, baseball cap, and jeans during his performance in the subway. His ordinary appearance does not match his superb musicianship, which, contrasts the author's words that he "plays like a God" (2008). It is only later the author reveals in detail the character's ethereal talents on violin. Thus, readers first knows Bell as an ordinary person, and then become transfixed by his ability, which might suggest that an effective technique of these stories is making those who are extraordinary, appear ordinary at first.

Heroes in winning Pulitzer features typically took on the duty of saving the victim and overcoming danger, adversity and reservations to do so. In some instances, past trauma illuminated a situation's severity. An example of this was observed when a rescue worker recounted his experience of a failed attempt to save children from a burning car to amplify the difficulty he faced if he found children in the rubble of a collapsed building after a tornado. The author might have placed that information in the story to emphasize the complication that lay ahead. Being a hero, the rescue worker overcomes his fears and adheres to his duty. In the 1998 winning story, a sergeant takes on a case that has arrived

at multiple dead-ends and seems unsolvable (French). Heroes tackle what appears impossible to remedy.

Navigating these obstacles, the hero is in a position of success and power. A surgeon opts to tackle a dangerous surgery that he failed once previously, which enhances the risk he takes in the story. In another winning piece, a world-class musician opts to play a very difficult piece of music in a subway during rush hour in Washington, D. C., which increases the odds against him. In yet another winning story, parents who adopt a neglected child take on potentially one of the most difficult children to socialize after adoption. Heroes take great risks and succeed in these stories.

Unlike Lule's course of the life of the hero, Pulitzer heroes generally had a difficult upbringing that is discussed later in the story, often in the form of a miniature narrative flashback that breaks away from the chapter or section in the story. These difficulties involve divorce, death, alcohol, drugs, and failure. It could be interpreted that the hero's tragic past serves to illustrate how it prepared him for his current duty. This flashback mirrors, every time, Booker's (2004) plot type of the "rags to riches story," which involves a young hero or heroine who escapes "obscurity, poverty, and misery" to an improved state, but that transition is wrought with "obstacles and challenges," which the character overcomes (p. 65). Tricksters are portrayed as having a similar history of hardship, but ultimately do not overcome those obstacles and continue a life of deviance; this archetypal figure will be examined later.

Heroes often used religion to overcome obstacles; religion also served as a coping mechanism when heroes confronted extreme situations. At the very least, authors relayed

that most heroes adopted some sort of faith or attend church. Marines were described as “warriors” and “angels” who escorted bodies of soldiers killed in duty back to the United States (Sheeler, 2006). A police sergeant used his Christian faith in his quest to find a murderer. French (1998) wrote that the characteristic that defined the sergeant “more than anything else, was his belief in God.” In another feature, an immigrant Muslim Imam used religion as a guiding force in his life as he aided Muslims in America. He advised his congregation about navigating the murkiness between traditional Islamic teachings and American secularism; the character also served as a figure who had the power to change how the Muslims in his community were perceived, creating order: “[Imams] are conduits to and arbiters of exhilarating, if sometimes hostile world, filled with promise and peril.” In the same story, the imam’s daughter suffers from epilepsy. Such a complication is viewed as a “test from God,” and that enduring faith would remedy the complication (Elliott, 2007). In another story converting to Mormonism reversed the fortune of a downtrodden soul turned highly admired judge. This recurring example could serve as a lesson that is repeatedly enforced in the narratives of these stories.

The Savior

Famous figures are also used as guiding forces in the stories examined. Little background is given about these famous people; a likely reason is because the culture from which these celebrities and major historical figures are drawn has already ascribed certain attributes to these characters. In these stories, those attributes are emphasized. Then-Mariners Major League Baseball superstar Ken Griffey Jr. watched over the ill son of a Major League umpire; conversely Roberto Alomar spit in the umpire’s face (Pollak,

1997). This contrast of archetypes of famous players serves to exemplify them in such a fashion where Griffey embodies a benevolent force while Alomar is portrayed as a contrasting threatening force. Both portrayals hinge on their real-life legacy as people and their accomplishments as players. The author noted that despite his deeds, Alomar evades justice and was a contributing factor to the Orioles World Series appearance. The author might have incorporated this infamous occurrence to illustrate how the superstar negatively affected an umpire who was grappling with his son's death and the illness of another. Conversely, this detail elevated Griffey's status in the narrative as a good force who exhibited altruistic qualities and cared for a suffering child. Even though these players are widely known, the author portrayed them as savior and villain; this difference illustrates that an author's depiction is powerful and that power might come from myth.

In another story, Martin Luther King Jr. was portrayed as a Christ-like figure who inspired African Americans in a river community to rise up against injustice and was portrayed as a guiding force of right and wrong. King arrives at a church in the rain and somehow transforms an otherwise dangerous area into "the warmest, brightest, safest place on earth," as described by the author. The author calls him a "God-sent man" and his voice as "a thunderclap before a lightning storm. It was a steamboat horn conjuring far-off places. It was Gabriel's trumpet calling her home" (Moehringer, 2001). King acts as an example for what is right and wrong. One character conveys that those who don't graduate from high school are negating King's sacrifice. The people in the community recite his words, "I have a dream." King is credited with "freeing" the people of Gee's Bend. These details illustrate that King is a figure who is widely recognized within the

culture and that his deeds have transcended history and have become mythic in this story as he embodies a Christ figure who helps free his people, and one that his people revere. This same concept could be applied to the immigrant imam in the 2007 winning story, who acted as his congregation's moral gauge and as a savior who helped his people navigate the Muslim religion in secular America.

The Victim

Another common archetypal figure in the winning Pulitzer feature stories examined was the victim. Some stories contained more than one victim, and only one story lacked an apparent victim. Victims in these feature stories faced some sort of adversity or suffering and either triumphed or perished. Many victims were suffering children. Victims suffered either from actions that were outside their control or actions they took that initiated misfortune — both illustrate that character and action are major components of these narratives.

Victims seem to battle never-ending complications and are persistently tormented. Grief is a common emotion that victims experienced, which caused those close to them to grieve as well. One section of J.R. Moehringer's 2000 winning story is titled, "No Rest for the Weary," which supports the assertion that victims in these stories are portrayed as enduring constant struggle. Via their situation, victims might serve as examples that support the idea that the world is a dangerous place, at least in the world winning Pulitzer feature stories create and perpetuate. This is stated explicitly in French's 1998 story; the murders of a woman's relatives influenced her worldview: "She began to view the world as a randomly cruel and unpredictable place, a place steeped in blood and violence."

Authors outlined difficulties that compounded the main complication the victim faced. In these stories, victims usually encountered financial struggles, worked blue-collar jobs, and made sacrifices to improve their situation. Because authors portray them as ordinary people, readers might better empathize with these characters, who are used sometimes as specific examples that illustrate a larger problem, such as immigration, government regulations, and the effects of racial segregation — all subjects of these stories. Sympathy for the victim is often a common theme as victims often face adversity alone and are subjects of oppression or violence. Such a technique might be a method authors use to advocate change or increase awareness about an issue.

Authors conveyed victims' ambitions, hopes, and dreams when they encountered major complications. What could be responsible for creating dramatic tragedy is when these characters cannot fulfill those desires because of their ailment, which tends to be either physical or emotional. A father's little boy who wanders off in the woods and dies, is described as dad's "future hunting partner" (Siegel, 2002). Victims' lives are often in peril and as they near or close to death; they are described as disappearing or fading: "It was like his whole person disappeared" (Pollack, 1997). A mother and her two daughters wanted to visit Disney World and lie on the beach, but the author uses the killer to interrupt these innocent ambitions, which creates a dark contrast between taking the quintessential American vacation and a dark fate of murder. Drastically, victims experienced a downward path as the dark force manifests a negative aspect that consumes the victim or one that the victim defeats — if the second option occurs, this turns them into a hero. This second portrayal of the victim as hero will be discussed later.

Most commonly in these stories, victims face complications that are brought about by outside forces. In one story, only an outside group of experts can remove a life-threatening facial growth. Although the choice to undergo surgery is up to the victim, his fate is placed in the hands of others, who are heroes. Other examples of this occurred when natural disasters demolished a town and an unidentified source sinks a fishing vessel; all three of these stories contained the archetype of “The Monster,” which will be examined later in this chapter.

Victims who suffer as a result of their own actions, typically are responsible for the death of another. These victims are described as ordinary people who possess desirable qualities. One elderly victim, described as “helpless, mild-mannered” and as a “family man,” shoots an intruding burglar, Anthony Williams, to protect those in his store; after this complication, he suffers from guilt and fear. “He [the victim] thinks about the dead stranger, Anthony Williams. This time, he isn’t angry — just numb and somewhat fearful” (Henderson, 1999). The victim in this story was also afraid for his own life because of retribution from the trickster’s family or friends who might seek revenge, which created another complication within the story. In another winning entry, a father’s son wandered from the vehicle during a hunting trip and died in the wilderness. The victim experiences intense grief, is “consumed by pain,” and cannot find solace his previous religious convictions (Siegel, 2002). This pain sometimes makes victims contemplate or commit suicide. As stated by the authors, characters who undergo these situations experience guilt as well.

Victims were also portrayed as seeking a support system from others who were similarly afflicted. This observation was discovered in the 2002 winning story about a man whose child wanders from his truck and dies or the story where parents accidentally kill their children by forgetting them in vehicles (Weingarten, 2010). Mexican children who are orphaned use their common problem to feel comforted: “They [orphans] console each other. They know a girl whose mother died of a heart attack. At least they say ours is alive” (Nazario, 2003). This sense of hope drawn from collective grief is what apparently inspires some characters to make decisions that change the course of their lives and the course of the narrative.

Deaths in myth are sometimes constructed as sacrifice (Lule 2001, Lule 1972). Victims death’s are justified. For example, one American soldier is portrayed as dying for a noble cause and there is much ceremony and ritual associated with the return of his body to American soil and his family. The ritual of saluting to the dead is communicated in this story, but reverence for the dead is a pattern many stories surrounding death and dying share.

Victim as Hero

Victims who function as heroes encounter adversity but triumph and serve as exemplary models for how problems are overcome. Such characters are portrayed as fighters who can, by some power, control their own fate if they live or die. One woman — beaten by her husband, oppressed by whites because of her race, and a cancer sufferer — was an avid-church goer and used her faith and religion to endure and overcome the dark forces in her life. She had a tough emotional exterior and fought the forces against

her to the end of the narrative (Moehringer, 2000). This triumph over opposition forces is often what makes a character fall into the victim as the hero archetypal figure.

Victims gain seemingly newfound bravery to become heroes and are willing to take risks to change their circumstances. In one story, a victim suffers from a massive facial deformity and elects to undergo life-threatening surgery to remove the growth (Hallman, 2001). Another victim, born into poverty in Mexico, decides to alter his situation in his teenage years and escape poverty, drugs and violence in his search for his mother in America (Nazario, 2003). These risks these characters take, not only transform them from victim to hero, but also create dramatic tension as the reader is unsure whether the character will live or die by the conclusion of the piece.

One victim in Weingarten's 2010 winning feature leaves her son locked in her car during the day, which results in his death and causes her internal grief. This emotive quality is evidenced when she says, "I feel I don't have the right to grieve in front of others." Along with containing her grief, or what could be construed as emotional weakness, she takes on the role of public advocate and increases awareness about her tragedy by telling her personal story. She is described as a "soldier" who wears metaphorical "armor." Mirroring Franklin's prescription that authors write a positive ending, she offered to carry the child for another couple who could not conceive; their son died similarly to the victim-turned-hero's son. This victim-turned-hero supported other victims who were depicted as weaker than she.

Perhaps the best illustration of victim as hero in these winning stories is 2012's "The Bravest Woman in Seattle." The main character survived sexual and physical

assault. She didn't remain silent and recounted the ordeal in a courtroom where her partner's killer watched in another room on a separate floor. The protagonist summoned hidden strength and pushed off her attacker and fled to get help, an action that saved her own life but not her partner's. According to Lule (2001), myth constructs death as sacrifice. "Through stories of sacrifice of the victim, myth offers reconciliation and elevates life in the face of death" (p. 22). Deaths of the innocent in myth are constructed as sacrifices, which in these stories often served to transform central characters who endured the deaths of those close to them.

The Good Parent

The Good Parent archetype was found repeatedly in stories of child suffering or death. This researcher found that by breaking the expectation that good things happen to good people, the author increased the dramatic tension in the story. Even when experiencing the downfall of another loved one, the good parent continued to display affection for that individual and forgave their misdeeds when society did not. Good parents were reassuring and nurturing forces that supported others, sometimes caring for others who are not their own children, such as a nurse caring for a child patient: "She runs her hands across Sam's face, gently, almost caressing the boy, not as a doctor but as a mother" (Hallman Jr., 2001). In this sample of Pulitzer feature stories, these "good parents" often experienced the loss of their child or children.

Lule (2001) defined this category as being the "Good Mother," though in Pulitzer feature stories, "good fathers" played a prominent role, as well. Some are described as a "family man," as one was in Lisa Pollak's 1997 winning story. Good fathers, like good

mothers, value family. In Pollack's story, a Major League Baseball umpire who copes with the loss of his son is described as "generous," "affectionate," "protective," and becomes distraught when he realizes his son will die.

Good parents used religion as a way to cope with adversity and are often churchgoers who use religion as a way to teach children right and wrong. Parents who had a son ailing from a genetic disease "prayed" that a procedure would help the child. It was observed that good parents make sacrifices for their children to survive, live comfortably, and improve their standard of living. In these stories, good parents are often idealized as individuals who possess special healing powers and the ability to aid and comfort children. Good parents discourage their children from taking risks, though their children ultimately end up taking that risk, which serves as a central complication of some stories.

The "Bad Mother," exemplified in the 2009 winning story, was a mother who neglected her children. She did not exhibit qualities indicative of "good parents" in other winning stories, which seemed to increase tension because she did not exemplify social norms for mothers prevalent in American myth, save for her desire to be with her children. The author even questioned the mother's inability to fill that social role and placed blame squarely on her: "Everything she says sounds like a plea, but for what? Understanding? Sympathy? She doesn't apologize. Far from it. She feels wronged." Supporting that assertion, the author includes a comment from a previous story that explicitly states that this maternal figure is "not fit to be a mother" (DeGregory, 2009). This portrayal contrasted that of the child's adopted parents who served as examples of

exemplary parents — nurturing, attentive, and involved. The bad mother shared some parallels with the archetype of “the scapegoat.”

The Scapegoat

Scapegoats, from the perspective of myth in these stories, are frequent targets of blame. These archetypes contrast the values and ideals of a society and illuminate what is “right” (Lule, 2001). Scapegoats are subjects of humiliation and typically perish, which could function as lessons for readers for the consequences suffered by those who commit acts deemed socially unacceptable. In Pulitzer-winning feature stories, scapegoats can be single individuals, corporations, or government institutions. The journalist often applies blame in stories by presenting facts that portray the scapegoat as the cause or contributor to the complication or a facilitator of a larger problem that needs to be remedied.

Scapegoats can be single individuals. In this sense, society stigmatize these characters based on prevailing values and beliefs that are so perceivably unmovable that those who do not follow those prescribed notions are represented as outsiders and committers of egregious offenses. In Barry Siegel’s 2002 story, one scapegoat falsely accused her husband of hiding and then killing her child. The author portrayed her as the wrongdoer. She had two husbands prior and lost custody of her children she had with previous men. Another scapegoat, a father, refused to care for his birth son and left to marry another woman in the 2003 story. Both characters suffered in the narrative. These instances could be said to illustrate what happens to those who do not mirror the norms of a society, specifically by negating their expected parental roles.

Groups of people can also be scapegoats. In these cases, society is broken because of these groups. Positive change is a suggested remedy that authors imply could restore order for these scapegoat groups. In J.R. Moehringer's (2000) winning piece, the white community was depicted as oppressors of the people of Gee's Bend, who were subjects of decades of racial segregation and fear. In another story, unheeding commuters were shown to place more value on personal time, wealth, and work than artistic beauty in a crowded Washington, D.C. subway. One called the music played by one of the best violinists in the world, "generic classical music, the kind the ship's band was playing in 'Titanic' before the iceberg" (Weingarten, 2008). Although Lule (2001) notes that typically, scapegoats are single people lambasted by society, in these instances society itself is personified as the wrongdoer.

Institutions and companies also exhibited characteristics of the scapegoat. This was evident in "Fatal Distraction," a story about well-intentioned parents who kill their children by forgetting them in vehicles. Car companies and the U.S. government were blamed for not implementing and enforcing proper safety measures in vehicles. The courts were blamed for inconsistent rulings on the issue — sometimes sentencing parents, other times not — because self-guilt and internal pain was deemed as a suitable punishment in some instances in the story (Weingarten, 2010). In another story about a mysterious sinking of a fishing boat, blame was placed upon authorities and Marine laws and regulations. The author wrote that the ocean has "scant safeguards and few legal protections." Also, the journalist produced information that could implicate a large shipping vessel as the cause of the shipwreck, a perspective that authorities previously

dismissed (Nutt, 2011). In French's 1998 piece, the inability of an understaffed police force to solve a ever-increasing number of cases was described as a possible contributor to the problems that left the murders of three Ohio women unsolved. Here, the journalists' ability to utilize the archetype of the scapegoat parallels journalism's watchdog function, which holds government institutions and corporations responsible for wrongdoings and implies that a broken system is a primary contributor to the overarching complication.

Victims can also be viewed as scapegoats when they commit an action that society deems unacceptable. In a few stories, authors recounted public sentiment on blogs and online comments, which called for extreme punishment for parents who accidentally contribute to the deaths of their children. In these stories, the reader comes to understand that the death of a child is the "worst thing in the world" and that internal grief and the criticism from society leads to guilt that can cause suicide or contemplation of suicide as it did in two stories (Siegel, 2002; Weingarten, 2010).

Further demonstrating the fluidity of character types, some characters strive to become heroes in their attempt to acknowledge and rectify past wrongdoings, such as one character who changed his stance on racism and worked to help the African Americans he had oppressed. These characters are often proud of their "metamorphosis," which occurs suddenly because they experience intense "remorse" for past actions they later identify as wrong. The former scapegoat in this story received awards and minor fame for his columns, which spoke out about the issue of racial oppression. Such actions seem to be based on alleviating his own sense of guilt, rather than benefitting those who he said

he attempted to help. Because of their positions as outsiders, these characters' deeds, while carrying some altruistic qualities, might harm those they intend to help.

The Trickster

Tricksters in this sample engaged in deviant activities and were, as Lule (2001) indicated, responsible for their own downfall. Tricksters are associated with violence, drugs, alcohol, laziness, poor, bad parents and possessed by some desire that leads to their demise. Tricksters evade justice in previous encounters with the law, but their actions in these stories leads to their death or capture. Few stories contained tricksters or villains. In two of the stories where the trickster had a prominent role, their race was noted by authors as African American, which could perpetuate the notion that racial minorities are more likely to engage in deviant activities than whites.

Tricksters are not described as entirely "bad" individuals, but people who had a difficult upbringing. Their good deeds, such as lending money or generosity, are overshadowed by their deviance. As perceived by this researcher, their difficult past is used by author to justify their current misdeeds and as an explanation for their deviant behavior. Tricksters trigger their own demise, ending in prison or death.

In death, tricksters were honored, as if their past wrongdoings were ignored or forgiven, which could illustrate that society mourns all archetypes who die, save for "the monster." This observation could be a defining characteristic that distinguishes these two archetypes. One author mentioned that at one trickster's funeral, he noticed a smiling photo and that he was dressed nicely with a flower. Bible verses were read during the

ceremony. His grandmother says that she could think of him as an “angel” (Henderson, 1999).

Perhaps the darkest portrayals of the Trickster myth in the stories analyzed were found in the most recent winning story, *The Bravest Woman in Seattle*, and 1998’s *Angels and Demons*. The man in the 2012 winning story is deemed so “uncontrollable” that he is not permitted to listen to the victim’s testimony. During the narrative, it is revealed that he has evaded justice before, though during the brutal ordeal he says he wished that his victims could have been his friends. He is a rapist. He is a murderer. He exhibited no emotion. He embodied the myth of the cold-blooded killer — in this sense, an unfeeling monster guided by animalistic impulses. Similarly, French’s story portrays the killer as a “demon” and senseless killer that enjoys inflicting death, grief, and trauma on victims. Both major negative forces in these two stories exhibit two sides — one that is favorable or outgoing which contrasts their dark, animalistic side that acts viciously and irrationally. Even monsters are portrayed as ordinary people or “the man next door” (French, 1998; Sanders, 2012). Perhaps these two characters mirror the monster more closely than the trickster, which demonstrates the fluidity of these character types. Their positive “human” traits make them more trickster than monster.

The Monster

In some stories, dark inanimate life-threatening forces were portrayed as monsters. Though not one of Lule’s (2001) archetypes, it is one of Booker’s (2004) central forces in his plot type, “The Monster, and the Thrilling Escape from Death,” where a hero and a monster duel in a life-threatening situation, and the hero emerges

victorious. In one story, the growth in a boy's face was personified by the author as a monster that "invades" and "worms" its way into the face. Another line dramatized the facial growth: "Four days later, on Aug. 13, the mass awakened" (Hallman Jr., 2001). The growth is given a life of its own.

Natural forces were also represented as monsters. In the 2011 winning story, the sea was personified as a dark, cold, dangerous "monster" that consumes sailors on moonless nights. In the 2005 feature, a violent storm that destroys an entire town is also given qualities that make it appear as a living and breathing entity — literally, a monster. The sky is a "Gothic-looking" "menace." The rain is "ornery." The tornado is a "batwing" and "wild beauty;" it seems to change directions and chase victims. It also was portrayed as carrying out a calculated attack on a town when it "paused over Utica ... almost if it had an appointment there, as if it knew right where it wanted to go, right down to the street address" (2005). This technique used by the author has the ability to increase the dramatic effect of the narrative — instead of a haphazardly moving tornado, it's suddenly a monster with a pre-determined course it follows, taking certain lives and sparing others. At the end of the narrative, the sky is described as "calm" and "beautiful;" the monster is vanquished (2005).

Mythic Abilities

Characters were portrayed as possessing special abilities, adding to their mythic quality. One example involved a judge, portrayed as a hero, and a victim who tragically committed suicide after he initiated the accidental death of his son and served jail time. Because the judge's father also committed suicide he was portrayed as possessing the

special ability to empathize with the victim (Siegel, 2002). Some characters, like this rescue worker, can foresee doom: “As he approached Milestone and saw his fellow Utica firefighter, saw their grim faces, he knew. He just knew. There were kids down there. Please, God” (Keller, 2005). Another character who lived in a secluded community in Alabama, was able to see “the future in her dreams” and “could sense that something was coming” (Moehringer, 2000). Some have the ability to restore order to a chaotic world such as the immigrant imam in Andrea Elliott’s 2007 winning story. The author in the 2009 story, recounted a soon-to-be father’s dream. He struggled to decide whether or not he should adopt a severely neglected girl. The dream alludes to a higher power sending a message to adopt the child: “Two giant hands slid through his bedroom ceiling, the fingers laced together. Danielle was swinging on those hands ... her arms reaching for him.” When the parents could sense that the child’s “eyes just looked like she just needed us,” this force was used as an explanation for the child’s adoption (DeGregory, 2009). In a 2012 story about a brutal stabbing, a survivor of the attack said that she “felt this powerful surge of energy” that enabled her to push away her attacker and escape to safety (Sanders, 2012). These stories are all examples of how myth seeps into all character types and how journalists unknowingly emphasize the special abilities ancient storytellers gave to the characters of old. In these examples, myth gives ordinary people extraordinary power, which helps them to overcome complications in these stories.

Even more examples emerged in this category. Joshua Bell, a world-class violinist, was able to bring a violin to life and give it human qualities: “in this musician’s masterful hands, it sobbed and laughed and sang.” He is able to draw people to listen by

evoking a “mysterious force” and his sound resembles “the sound of two instruments in harmony” (Weingarten, 2008). In Sonia Nazario’s 2003 winning story, her character was guided by a mysterious inner influence that guided him from Mexico to his final destination in the U.S. Even animals were given special abilities. A dog was said to howl when his master died fighting a war an ocean away (Sheeler, 2006). Even a tornado, personified as a monster, was able to “put a spell” on faraway viewers (Keller, 2005).

Victims have the ability to foresee tragedy and sense misfortune when things are about to go wrong: “In the forest, Wayment began to have a bad feeling,” or “something told him, go home” (Siegel, 2002). A victim in Gene Weingarten’s 2010 winning story experienced two dreams that she interpreted as a foreboding prophecy of the death of her son, which came to fruition. In these instances, characters’ mythic abilities might be a technique authors use to foreshadow problems characters will experience. Readers might identify these looming problems and wait until they come to fruition. It is the observation of this researcher that such a technique creates what Franklin (1994) and Iglecias (2005) call “tension.” This foreshadowing also infers that the characters saw their fate before it passed, which implies that American culture could view life as a predetermined chain of events that humans have little power to influence.

Beliefs and Values

The narrative approach to storytelling brings readers in to the lives of the characters. One way myth conveys beliefs and values in story is through a character, or archetypal figure. A character’s values and beliefs and the consequences for adhering to those convictions are played out during the course of the story. The strength of narrative

is that it creates episodes as if they happened in real time, like a film that portrays certain images and events in such a fashion that the reader takes those events as first-person experiences that reinforce what are depicted as “correct” choices. Narrative makes distant lands and distant problems real as readers are able to experience it as it plays out, sentence by sentence, scene by scene, and chapter by chapter. The author creates a world through characters who act as agents, enabling the reader to “test” concepts of right and wrong by observing characters and the consequences of their actions.

One major over-arching belief is that people who are generally “good” do not deserve the misfortune that befalls them. Victims who are afflicted ask why they are afflicted in these stories, which correlates with the pervasive American view that good things happen to good people. Paralleling the analysis of Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* illustrated in Chapter 2, in Pulitzer stories, the opposite also comes to pass and breaks the expectation of what “should happen” to those who play by the rules. This negation of expectation creates a dramatic element within the stories. Intentionally or not, these patterns support the idea that life isn’t fair and is a lesson that is taught repeatedly in these stories.

Overwhelmingly in stories, there existed decisions that were two-fold: to take action or not. Each of the two choices had consequences and making these decisions was often difficult for the characters involved. Such decisions made by the characters had an influential role in how the author portrayed them as hero, scapegoat, trickster, victim and good parent to name a few. How characters reacted to the consequences of those decisions also related them with a certain archetype.

The value of family and keeping the family unit intact was a central value communicated in these stories. When that unit was broken, often by death, characters experienced grief, which illustrated that high value is placed on the unified family in American culture. In this sample of 15 stories, many families were non-traditional or were couples who dated but never married. There was one same-sex couple. Even though families were often ailing from financial woes, family was used as a way for characters to rely on a positive force amid the adversity in the narrative, even when the family members killed were portrayed as deviant. Family is one way American culture has mended these ancient myths, which has transcended the maternal presence and become a paternal relationship in some cases or unmarried individuals cohabitating. This concept doesn't mirror what previously constituted the traditional American family.

Characters communicated that misdeeds, even when unintentional, have consequences and punishments. Sometimes, this involved a judge handing down a sentence for parents who accidentally contributed to the death of their children, though those victims are described as experiencing extreme emotional pain (Weingarten, 2010). In one story, killing a deviant member of society resulted in an internal struggle within the man who pulled the trigger, which conveyed the lesson that killing is wrong because of the consequences suffered, even though the man did so to save his life and the lives of those around him (Henderson, 1999). That speaks to the power of portrayal and the concept of inclusion and exclusion of details and facts. Certain details presented make meaning because they mesh with a worldview. The belief that killing is wrong is one that is also communicated in churches.

Authors conveyed values using character, as well as deriving their depiction from their own experience and perspective. In a 1999 winning story, one author demonstrated his position on gun control in an indirect manner when he wrote: “Moreover, one strand of wisdom says guns drawn by employees on criminals are all too often taken away and turned on the employees or co-workers, sometimes with disastrous results” (Henderson). This statement is also used a way to foreshadow the store worker who would shoot and kill a robber. In a 2001 story, parents are told that their unborn child has a facial deformity and are given the choice to abort it or continue with childbirth (Hallman Jr.). Still, the parents elect to have the child. This example could also be interpreted as a way the author reinforces that killing is not accepted by society. The reader has come to know this victim’s hopes and dreams and might experience guilt if he were killed, which shows that characters in feature stories are vessels by which values and beliefs are communicated. This story also teaches the lesson that those with physical deformities are not mentally handicapped and that the afflicted should receive sympathy and compassion. In the same story, the actions of the victim show that he is willing to undergo life-threatening surgery not only to improve his functioning, but also to improve his appearance. This facet might serve to teach readers that endurance and persistence pays — or that beauty is something worth dying for.

Characters also place their belief in a higher power as a way to justify why they had to endure tragedy. “The Good Lord put us through four-and-a-half hours of hell,” says one survivor of a building collapse after a tornado (Keller, 2005). Despite the tragic outcome, the events were considered a religious test that would separate believers from

non-believers. In 2010's "Fatal Distraction," the author communicates the perspective of a source who says her child's recent death is God's retribution for a previous abortion. In the same story, a priest who consoles a man who accidentally killed his child; the author, Weingarten, writes that the priest is later killed by a falling tree. These details could reaffirm the idea that a higher power creates a negative destiny for those who commit a heinous act, even if that act is unintended. Others forsake their faith, citing that God has wronged them — these characters are not portrayed as heroes. "God's will" is a primary explanation of characters' fates. This affirmation demonstrates that American culture could believe that destiny is determined by fate.

From these stories, it can also be inferred that humans, particularly Americans in these stories, value an orderly world. This is evidenced in the abundance of characters in these stories who have the power to make sense of chaos and provide solutions to problems. In an orderly world, it is clear what is good and bad and right and wrong. In some of these Pulitzer stories, that line is explored and tested, but ultimately, a decision is made and a sense of order is restored by the end of the story as the character solves a problem or comes to some sort of internal realization that puts them at peace.

Themes and Subjects

Paralleling the criticism with most media coverage, these stories centered on negative themes, which builds upon Moore and Lamb's 2005 findings. More specifically, many of these stories centered on an emotional journey as the characters sought to overcome or reconcile events that caused them to endure internal pain. Correlating with this is a very common theme present in many stories: how characters cope with

negativity. One story's theme revolves around how a serviceman endures an emotionally taxing job throughout the entire narrative. Deaths, particularly the death of children, were also common themes in these feature stories. Other themes dealt with overcoming racial injustice, dissolving family, the permanence of destruction, the diminishing appreciation for beauty in the modern world, the ambiguity of wrongness, and the persistence of danger in everyday life.

In the stories, a thematic sense of never-ending danger was maintained throughout the narrative. In one story, parents fight an illness which impacts one of their sons and kills another; they are told that this disease could be looming in one of their other two children and could introduce another major complication into the story. This sense of impending doom was seen as a device that was written in dramatic fashion by means of the author's suppositions:

Maybe someday John and Denise will sit 8-year-old Erin and 5-year-old Megan down at that table and explain to them what it means to be ALD carriers — that ALD could affect their health when they are older, that they could pass the disease on to their own children (Pollak, 1997).

Binary themes, common in myth, were pervasive in the stories examined. Often stories alluded that a middle ground didn't exist — a character either won or lost, lived or died. In one story, the author explicitly stated that “there was no middle ground for the people in Milestone. It was life or death” (Keller, 2005). Other stories played off this binary concept and navigated the middle, asking readers if loving parents who forget children in locked cars are criminals (Weingarten, 2010). Another story focusing on this

theme examined how an Islamic religious figure deftly navigates between conservative Muslim values and secular America (Elliot, 2007).

These stories countered the notion that America is the land of opportunity. Only in a few stories was America portrayed as such. In one strong example, a Mexican boy attempted to find his mother in America, which is depicted as a land that rescues those in poverty and distress. In most other stories, though, the quiet American life becomes suddenly wrought with danger. This counters the typical notion that American is the land of prosperity, a common theme that has prevailed in American society. This sentiment was popularized in the work of Horacio Alger, which often focused on an individual's rise from poverty and obscurity as typified in the myth of the "American Dream." The prevalence of these negative themes could result from storytellers seeking accounts that are inherently "exciting" and wrought with complications, when in reality, life fails to meet this ever-dangerous depiction of the world that these stories present. Pulitzer stories could then be said to present a dramatic version of reality, which would make a more effective story.

The theme of finality was also common in these stories. Final moments are frequently referenced in these stories, which could suggest that the characters or authors ascribe these occurrences special consideration. One winning entry is even entitled, "Final Salute" (Sheeler, 2006). In another story, the character recounts her final time sleeping with her husband when he visited her after his death as a benevolent entity when she was ailing in the hospital. The author recreates this story: "Then he lay down beside her, draped a heavy arm over her hip, and they slept together one last time in the bed

they'd shared for 36 years" (Moehringer, 2000). In reciting her words, the author perpetuates her story as myth. In the same story, one chapter is titled "You Can't Cross Back," which implies that actions and choices are permanent and final.

In another winning feature, a woman departs from her town for the last time before it's leveled by a tornado. The author crafts a dramatic moment from what *could* have happened:

Had she happened to life her pale blues eyes to the rear view mirror as she left the city limits, she would have seen, poised there like a tableau in a snow globe just before it's shaken up, her last intact view of the little town she loved
(Keller, 2005).

In a 2011 story, the victim recalls the last time he saw his friend aboard the ship; the moment is retold by the journalist. After handing him a life-preserver, "he looked at his friend one last time and let go" (Nutt).

It could be concluded that Americans, or even humans, deem final moments as sacred, evidenced in their explicit and implicit prevalence in these feature stories. Still, as stated previously, the author wields the final ability to include or exclude information to achieve a variety of effects. Finality was found, in these stories, as a plausible way to increase dramatization in these winning stories.

Plot and Complications

The author portrays daily routines as being disrupted, suddenly, by a dark force, which often serves as a story's overarching complication. As was observed by this researcher, this disruption of normalcy contributed greatly to breaking expectations and

introduced an integral element, which pushed the story to a climax, sometimes into and event of “chaos and screams” (Keller, 2005). This is a climax of the story and, often, the major complication. In the 2012 winning story, the bedtime ritual was used to convey that sense of normalcy; after each step in the routine, the author chorused “...like always,” “...like always” (Sanders, 2012). The reader also knew that the killer would enter the story — just not when. When the killer enters and disrupts the tranquility, it seems like a “dream” to the characters. In another story, a typically docile elderly man goes about his daily routine at work until a robber busts through the front door and makes threats. The elderly worker is forced to kill a thief who threatens customers and employees during the robbery (Henderson, 1999). In another story, an otherwise responsible father — who doesn’t drink, use drugs, or have a criminal record — is befallen by misfortune and subsequently endures emotional torment over tragic events (Pollack, 1997). Tom French’s 1998 story revolves around the murders of three “ordinary” people from a small town in Ohio who are going about their lives as they normally would. It’s when they take a rare vacation from their hard work, a supposed reward, that they are inexplicably murdered. Like this story and others, readers know that tragedy is about to occur — it’s when and how it will occur that might keep readers engaged in the story. These unexpected actions of the character have the ability to increase the dramatic quality of the narrative as the reader encounters an unexpected twist that manifests from the author’s construction of the story.

Authors were perceived to maintain a sense of uncertainty, doom or dread throughout their stories, a technique that potentially increased a story’s dramatic aspects.

The end of one chapter in a 2001 winning story illustrated the ongoing conflict of life and death in the stories sampled when the main character asked: “Will it kill me?” This sense of impending doom is carried throughout the narrative (Hallman Jr., 2001). Also readers are privy to complications before characters encounter them, which increases tension until the complication occurs and a resolution restores a sense of stability. Complications in these stories revealed how characters reacted to problems, highlighted the internal and external forces at play, and uncovered the values and beliefs characters employed to overcome obstacles.

These stories are fueled by conflict, which perpetuates complications and the central character’s decisions. Often, two forces are at odds with each other. For example, there were racial tensions between whites and blacks, as well as between a boy and his facial deformity. Parents grappled with grief after their children’s deaths. A world-class violinist fought ignorance. In two stories, the events are recounted as mysteries that readers “solve” as they read and “find clues” about how a fishing vessel might have sank or the murderer of three women. Another posits a question after which an experiment is conducted, illuminating an unfortunate aspect of life that artistic beauty out of context is often unnoticed. In these respects conflict taught lessons, a function of myth. The outcomes of conflict illustrated who most correlated with one of the seven archetypal figures identified.

A frequent complication characters encountered was one of something that threatened the lives of those involved within the story, which increased the tragic outcomes that manifested from a series of complications. Victims faced obstacles, which

lessened their chances for survival and increased tension within the narrative. Some major obstacles that were faced concerned undergoing life-threatening medical procedures, surviving a tornado, escaping a killer, or discovering the cause of a sinking. Narrative presents these complications with rich, vivid details and invite readers to experience the occurrences as they might have happened. This “front row seat” approach makes journalism mirror cinema as each segment is placed in chapters or segments that project pictures with words. In this way, readers are better able to sympathize with victims as they too have experienced a version of reality that characters also experienced.

Heroes were placed in situations where they determined the fate of others. Surgeons had the choice of rejecting victims with extreme complications, but chose to confront danger, even when the victim could have been killed. A coast guard rescuer plunged into a torrid ocean with limited time to find survivors. These and other risks taken by heroes contributed to a story’s dramatic element, as a series of complications were strung together to increase tension until a resolution established normalcy.

Endings

Even in tragic endings, there is some sense of resolution. In stories surrounding the victim, the narrative guides characters to some sort of inner peace that illustrates that even in the face of extreme adversity, the world isn’t such a bad place, after all (Franklin, 1994). This isn’t to say that every story had a happy ending, but that the main character or characters reach some state of equilibrium where order is restored and they come to terms with the events that transpired during the narrative.

In few stories there is an explicitly happy ending. In the 2008 winning feature, after his Washington, D.C. subway performance was a flop, a world-class musician's talents are validated with a national award that names him the best musician in America. This could be used to demonstrate that society affirms greatness and that the frame in which greatness is viewed depends upon what Weingarten (2008) called "context." Without context, the hero loses affirmation of his prolific abilities, as he did in Weingarten's 2008 feature. In another winning story, a neglected child overcomes difficulties assimilating into society and is adopted by parents who care for her despite her shortcomings (DeGregory, 2009). This narrative has the potential to teach readers that parents can reconcile life's problems and that benevolent forces can influence outcomes.

In other stories, tragic endings occurred, but the character arrived at some realization that indicates a change and a new understanding that was previously absent. A man who shot and killed a robber quelled his internal conflict by accepting his decision and made peace with his choice; he argued that "it could have been worse," meaning that the situation could have ended with *his* death (Henderson, 1999). A judge learned a valuable lesson when he sentenced father who unintentionally contributed to the death of his son: "It's not a bad thing to have Paul Wayment's [the victim's] face forever part of my life" (Siegel, 2002). In another story, the author communicates an Islamic religious leader's purpose to his people and religion: "They need someone who lives among them and knows their pain" (Elliott, 2007). In a 2010 winning story, a victim turns hero when she offers to carry a child for a couple who lost their son, which indicates sympathy for the afflicted as an integral value to these stories as well.

In one story, the ending is very dark and leaves the reader with very little sense that a father has come to terms with the loss of his sons ones at sea. This line is described from the perspective of the father:

For Fuzzy, life now is entwined by the vocabulary of loss. So on many days, in the quiet before dawn, he gets in his truck and heads north again, past Credle's Salvage, past the Play Boy Barbershop, past the Original Free Will Baptist Church, until all that he's left behind is swallowed by darkness (Nutt, 2011).

But even with this somber ending, in fact the most dark conclusion observed during this research, this could be interpreted as the father moving on and leaving tragedy behind him as he seeks a new future away from grief and tragedy; he says he avoids places that remind him of his loss. Still, this ending with its poetic ring, leaves the reader with a sense of closure, but with the sense of an ending, nonetheless.

Mythic Settings

The setting in which the story takes place also contributed to the dramatic qualities of the narrative. In one story, a historically safe neighborhood becomes plagued with crime as time passes; the residents who have lived there for decades do not wish to move, so this causes an intersection of a crime-riddled environment and a community that formerly valued playing by the rules. Similarly the setting in another story highlights the contrast between rich and poor, which acts as a motivator for a mother's actions of relocating to the U.S. and financially supporting her children from afar. The extravagant houses she lusts for in this story also serve as a reminder of her struggle to obtain money

and give her children a better life. Again, this contrast provided by setting highlights the overarching complication.

In another story, Gee's Bend, a rural Alabama river community, was described as a distant, foreign land, with huge throngs of insects, and one that has largely resisted modern technology. The region is captured in old photographs where researchers came and documented its inhabitants; the author compared one girl in the photographs to a young Egyptian queen on the Nile River. The author contributed to this portrayal of a foreign land by quoting the main character: "To me, this don't even seem like the USA" (Moehringer, 2000). "The Other World" is one of Lule's (2001) news myths and is a central focus of Booker's (2004) plot type, "Voyage and Return" (p. 105). The central component of both concepts is that characters are fascinated by a strange and different land. It's interesting that in Moehringer's story the distant land is actually American's own backyards.

In some stories, the setting is described in such a way that it plays off the events that transpire and acts as a unifying force that closes the narrative. For example, fireworks went off across from where a stabbing victim was eating; at that moment, she received a call that her attacker was apprehended. Shifts in weather after a tragic or fortuitous events was a backdrop and gave context to the mood in the scene. For example, after a victim dies, the author noted that the weather turned cold (Siegel, 1997). Shifts in the setting contributed to shifts in mood in the narrative, as emotions turned somber or joyous.

Time of day is also used to reflect closure and death as in some stories. For example, a common occurrence in fictional works is victims die at sundown. A 2000 winning Pulitzer story ends at sunrise as the character conveys that there is peace in death. The author builds on this effect, writing that death is “like the end of a long day, when she can finally sit in her screened-in porch, body at ease, mind at peace” (Moehringer, 2000).

Sacred Places and Artifacts

The deceased’s things and places that are described as sacred after their death served as a way for surviving characters to remember those who died. In these stories, the living held these items and places in extreme importance. Sacred places are named so because of their connection to past ancestors and current inhabitants who have some connection to the land and the people who lived there previously. Such places are imbued with a sacred quality in that the author deems “timeless” (Moehringer, 2000). The place takes on a special meaning for the characters in the story and the location is not abandoned for convenience but instead retained for its past ties to history. In an “effort to hold onto memories” victims who have lost something return to sacred places to conjure memories of those who are absent. “One [child] has slept in her mother’s bed; another has smelled her perfume, put on her deodorant, her clothes” (Nazario, 2003).

Such places also have a religious significance where they are revered by characters as some have a particular “spot to meet God and talk with him,” which the people call their “special ‘praying place’” (Moehringer, 2000). A father made a memorial

in the wilderness where his son died to remember his loss and regularly would drive to the created sacred place unhampered by weather in the snow:

Using directions provided by a sheriff's detective, he started weekly pilgrimages to the spot where Gage had died. He brought Gage's toys with him, he carved their names in a tree, he built a memorial. There he sat for hours on end, reading the Bible (2002).

At one point, the character kills himself at that exact spot, at "his beloved dusk," which shows that time of day can impact the dramatic aspects of setting.

In other stories, victims seek to escape their unfortunate situation by retreating where friends and loved ones perished. When they cannot do so, this amplifies the story's tragic elements. A victim in the 2010 story cannot escape these memories because she cannot afford another vehicle, something that compounds the victim's suffering and creates a complication.

Symbol

In some stories, a symbol served as a central idea around which the story was crafted. "Girl in the Window," utilized a window as a way to illustrate the victim's journey. The window is symbolic of the future. It is present in the first sentence, where a neighbor watches little girl "pale, with dark eyes" looking out of the broken window alone. The window makes two more appearances. During its final reference, the girl and her adopted father gaze at the sun out the window of her new home, which could symbolize her improved life chances (DeGregory, 2009). In another winning narrative, lottery tickets and card games are used as a way to suggest that life is a gamble,

especially for a victim in one story whose father must choose to draw possibly tainted marrow from his sister or use samples from a third party that might or might not be effective (Pollack, 1997). In a third feature, a facial deformity is symbolized as a “mask” that hides the true character of the victim, as the author reveals the character through the narrative and the reader learns intimate details about the boy — where he lives, what his room looks like, who he finds attractive (Hallman Jr., 2001). This symbol of the facial deformity as a mask is used as the central complication that the character must overcome to return life to a normal state.

Similarly in another story, the river and ferry are given heavy religious symbolic significance: “Like God, the river is whatever those who love it or fear it say it is.” The author explicitly states that this reasoning is derived from past myths: “There are reasons, spiritual and logical reasons, why rivers run through epic poems and hymns of the African American tradition, whether the Congo or Ohio, the Gambia or Mississippi” (Moehringer, 2000). The river is viewed as a problem that must be confronted and the ferry represents “Jesus” that guides the main character from one side to the other. In another winning story about a shipwreck, the lone survivor clutches to a religious medallion around his neck and chants repeatedly for God to save him. He attributes his rescue to God’s will (Nutt, 2011). In 2006’s “Final Salute,” Marine service workers are symbolized as being harbingers of death, as the author notes that soldiers’ wearing blue uniforms at a family’s doorstep indicate that tragic news is about to be conveyed.

Trophies of heroes were identified in these stories as well. A doctor kept photographs of past patients to remind herself of the failures and successes she

experienced. When she helps remove one of the most serious facial deformities from the main character of one story, he sends her a photograph to add to the wall (Hallman Jr., 2001). A coast guard rescue worker uses life preservers as trophies for the victims he saved from the sea (Nutt, 2011). An orphan uses pictures to remember those who have been killed and as motivation to embark on a quest (Nazario, 2003). This might suggest that American culture retains trophies because they are tied to memories that are preserved in physical format. In a story about fallen American soldiers, the flag “escorts” a body “home,” and a sonogram of an unborn child is placed on the heart of soldier prior to his burial (Sheeler, 2006). Sand from a trip with fellow soldier is placed on a casket prior to burial, which signifies as the author stated, a shared moment between those who were elsewhere and the dead arriving, ceremoniously, at his final resting place.

Religious Motifs

Religion served as a guiding entity in these stories and was used as a consoling force for those who experienced adversity or loss. Religious figures are portrayed as benevolent forces willing to help the afflicted and comfort those shunned by society. Serving as a basis for this category was a 2005 study that found a heavy presence of religious themes, but did not note specifics, how those specifics were communicated through myth, or assess the seven winning entries since the study was conducted (Moore & Lamb). This research built upon those findings using myth as a lens.

Many religious texts were quoted verbatim in the stories assessed. A Bible verse was read during a eulogy: “Let no your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions” (Henderson, 1999). The author makes

note in her 2011 winning story of a father's photograph of his sons who are wearing crisp white T-shirts with a quote from Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine understanding" (Nutt). This is used as a way for the author to allude that the characters use religion as a way to reconcile tragedy. In Moehringer's 2000 winning story, a hymn was woven into the story where victims used their religious convictions to overcome racial oppression. The hymn was quoted as such: "It may be trouble at the ferry, I'm gonna stand there anyhow. Dear Lord! Dear Lord!" In the 2012 winning story, one character recited a prayer as she was being stabbed: "'Our Father, please help us. Our Father in heaven...'" Her partner joined her and prayed to God that he let them live" (Sanders). And in yet another story, a police sergeant who was a "born-again Christian," made it his mission to finding a killer, who was described as a "demon," which plays explicitly off of two opposing forces of good and evil doing battle; the hero, a Christian, must defeat the trickster, a murderer (French, 1998). Using these examples, it could be concluded that religion for characters and for the American people is used to endure trials and obstacles. Also, the author's choice to incorporate such elements, sometimes quoting religious sources verbatim, indicates that these elements are worthy details to include in these stories and that they could be major forces in American society.

Religious motifs were embedded in most facets of myth and formed patterns from story to story, and even resided within central themes. The ferry in the 2000 winning feature was explicitly referenced as "Jesus Christ," and would be the entity that would help the oppressed cross to the other side of the river. The author paraphrases the words of one source who described the impending ferry as such: "He talks about the ferry as if it

were a vessel of salvation, like Noah's Ark, or the basket that carried baby Moses" (Moehringer, 2000). Even when tragic situations believed to have resulted from a higher power, characters viewed those events as a test of faith. In one story, prior to the tragedy, references to God were subliminal, but after the tornado destroyed the town, there were frequent and explicit references to God. The author even offers her own rationale for why a higher power would allow tragic events to transpire: "Good people die. And God doesn't have to explain himself. It's his call" (Keller, 2005). Paralleling that finding, an imam's daughter suffers from epilepsy, but he communicates that hardship is a "test from God," which could imply that how people endure complications is a measure of faith (Elliott, 2007).

Objects were even given human qualities that embodied religion in these stories. "Quaking aspens seemed alive in the breeze, humming a faint prayer" (Siegel, 2002). In its final moments, the long arm of the starboard outrigger of a ship points heavenward as it sinks (Nutt, 2011). Dead children are described as "angels" and "heaven-sent gifts" (Siegel, 2002).

Religion was also used as a positive transformative force that altered the course of life for some characters, as some made positive life changes, an assertion that is derived from past research that argued religion might be used as a guiding force of right and wrong in these stories (Moore & Lamb, 2005). One victim contemplates suicide but elects otherwise because, according to his religion, suicide would result in eternal separation, as he would enter hell and his son would be in heaven. When possible, the victims' in these stories choose instead to suffer in life than to die, which could teach

readers lessons about suicide. The victim that does kill himself in the 2002 story effects the lives of those close to him, tragically. His death is portrayed as a damaging occurrence that triggers a string of complications that negatively affect others. The hero in the story is blamed for the suicide of the victim.

When death occurs in narrative, discussions of religion frequently and inevitably surface. In one 2005 story, gravesites were marked with white crosses. Parents of a dead child placed their gravestones next to his, which could be interpreted as belief in reunion with loved ones in death (Keller, 2005). In another feature, a father commits suicide in order to be with his son again (Siegel, 2002). In another 2011 feature, family members of the deceased believe they will rejoin the dead in the afterlife. A woman tells her dead lover, “I’ll see you again. I promise. I’ll see you again” (Nutt).

Although, sources often create some of the portrayals in these stories via their quotes, it can be argued that authors and editors have the final decision of what is included in a story and how the information included is represented. Thus, this heavy influence of religious motifs is conveyed by the source, recorded by the journalist and perpetuated after publication, forming a circular loop that recycles an idea that is accepted and perpetuated.

Extremes and Rarities

Many of the subjects in these stories focused on facets that stressed the unusual, the extreme, and the rare. It could be interpreted that these winning journalists seek out extremes or special cases as a way to illustrate a broader topic by using the most unbelievable, rare, or unusual case. The technique has the potential to create drama and

interest, which would engage readers. For example, Lisa Pollak's 1997 winning story was about a disease "so rare, few people have ever heard of it." In another story, an ailment was described as one that "doctors knew little about" and one that would require "the most difficult surgery ever" (Hallman Jr., 2001). Decisions made by one character were, as he described it, "the biggest and most painful mistake of my life." Lost alone in the wilderness, his child had the "slimmest chances of being found alive" (Siegel, 2002). Natural disasters such as tornadoes are "the most violent storms on Earth," and its destruction sounded "like the end of the World" (Nutt, 2005). In 2009's "Girl in the Window," an official says that she has never encountered a case like Danielle's. This emphasis on extremism serves to highlight the severity of the instance and also the extreme predicament the main character faces and the difficulty involved with overcoming such severe obstacles (DeGregory).

Vivid descriptions of death, injury and grotesque conditions were also a part of many of these stories. Other descriptions present were of a child freezing to death, a child being crushed by a garage door, and children overheating in the backs of cars. The conditions of the bodies after death are also conveyed. In one story, the author wrote that "frozen tears" were in the child's eyes. One boy has a massive facial deformity that is described in detail, even though photographs of the deformity accompany the story:

A huge mass of flesh balloons out from the left side of his face. His left ear, purple and misshapen, bulges from the side of his head. His chin juts forward. The main body of tissue, laced with blue veins, swells in a dome that runs from sideburn level to chin. The mass draws his left eye into a slit, warps his mouth

into a small, inverted half moon. It looks as though someone has slapped three pounds of wet clay onto his face, where it clings, burying the boy inside (Hallman Jr., 2001).

Later in the story, the author gives a detailed account of the surgery: There is the sound of sizzling, as if grease has been dropped onto a grill. A plume of smoke rises from Sam's face. But the bleeding continues ... The team begins to pull back the skin. They can see the edge of the mass. 'Easy,' Mulliken tells Marler. 'Easy.' The side of the boy's face oozes blood. Drops splatter to the floor. A red stain spreads through the surgical drape as if someone had spilled a glass of wine on a white tablecloth (Hallman Jr., 2001).

The vivid detail of the description as well as the actions of the surgeon, the hero, illustrate the tangle between two opposition forces and the severe risks involved with the procedure. Failure could result in death.

Injuries are also given intense descriptive attention. The author recounts some of victims' experiences and injuries that occur after a tornado strikes:

The brutality, the blunt and unimaginable violence of hundreds of tons of stone and wood and concrete collapsing upon fragile frames and soft flesh. There were shattered bones and severed arteries and fractured skulls and lacerated organs and one transection of the brain stem — decapitation (Keller, 2005).

In another story about fallen American soldiers, the blast that killed a soldier “was so fierce, it blew off an arm and leg of the Marine directly behind the [victim]” (Sheeler, 2006). The 2012 feature gave a brutal description of a victim who had been repeatedly

stabbed. The author states that some testimony was so “gruesome” it was not recounted in the story. “Blood gushed out of her neck.” Blood spurted from her bodies. Her throat was slit. Her hands were “too bloody” to open the front door. When she banged on the neighbor’s front door for help: “she noticed the skin open on one of her arms, muscle popping through” (Sanders, 2012).

Although not about death, injury, or illness, working conditions for adults and children in Mexico had the same sort of shocking grotesqueness that was present in other stories: “The trash squishes beneath their feet, moistened by loads from the hospital, full of blood and placentas” (Nazario, 2003). The living conditions described in another story made one rookie officer on the scene nauseous. The author writes that a diaper of feces leaks down officer’s leg as he picks her up and takes her from the home. The author and police source communicate the nature of the scene. The following is an abbreviated version of the description:

Urine and feces – dog, cat and human excrement – smeared on the walls, mashed into the carpet ... The floor, walls, even the ceiling seemed to sway beneath legions of scuttling roaches (DeGregory, 2009).

Such attention and prominence devoted to vivid detail of the deceased, dying, and grotesque conditions could signify the culture’s preoccupation and fascination with those aspects. Their ability to present something shocking that most readers probably haven’t experienced would increase the story’s allure and the usage of these descriptions in stories. Their nature for stories with these descriptions being tough and difficult topics to report, might also earn them distinction as being winners of the Pulitzer Prize. Also, this

could signify that stories containing these elements receive notoriety and accolades from within the journalism community, so authors continue to include them in stories and judges continue awarding them the feature story's highest honor.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This study uncovered that mythic components embedded within Pulitzer Prize-winning feature stories were integral to each narrative, which could indicate that certain components of myth are vital when crafting a compelling feature story, particularly those that are deemed award-winning. Identifying mythic components within these stories gave insight to what elements might make award-winning feature stories effective. This study fills a gap the understudied area in scholarship concerning myth's portrayals and functions in award-winning feature stories.

The patterns identified among the depictions of archetypal figures suggests that there is a culturally accepted expectation of how certain characters, based on their archetype, should respond to certain obstacles. Also the prevalence of the seven archetypal figures discovered could suggest that most stories rely on these portrayals and that characters must fall into certain archetypes in order for readers of a particular culture to better relate and understand the problems characters face. Among the patterns of archetypal figures discovered were the hero, victim, scapegoat, trickster, and good parent. Also, new archetypes, the monster and the savior, were identified based on the research done by Booker (2004). Lule's (2001) study outlined seven prevailing news myths, which served as guides for forming categories, but these were reorganized and amended with the patterns discovered in these samples. The Good Mother required modification to include the "Good Father," as single-parent households sometimes placed the father in a child-care role; additionally, the relationship between father and child was just as heavily

stressed as that between mother and child, which could suggest that the role of the non-traditional family is making grounds in these stories as a variety of family-units are represented, or perhaps the concept of family is an effective way to make conflicts more dramatic in stories when the family unit is dissolved. Tricksters were typically portrayed as villains, though they were not prevalent throughout the stories; another dark force, monsters, were often personified forces of nature or an internal struggle characters faced. Scapegoats took the blame for misdeeds and were interpreted to surface as a part of journalism's watchdog function that serves to uncover wrongdoing and injustice in institutions and government bodies.

Journalism creates meaning, confirms societal values and beliefs, and conveys a particular version of reality. The mythic elements discovered in these stories were observed to support those three facets. Some examples observed seemed to be applicable to more than one category, which supports myth's ability to weave its components into a cohesive structure as all parts work together to create an overall effect. For example, archetypal figures conveyed beliefs and values, and religious motifs were found within mythic abilities and sacred places, among other categories. This observation parallels past research that suggests that various components of myth function as a whole and that the myth as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Waardenburg, 1980, p. 24-47).

By this study's identification of particular components, patterns among stories became apparent. This supports that myth is often implicitly embedded in stories and that authors potentially unknowingly rely on myth to convey a certain meaning. In turn, their audiences internalize that meaning. This cycle contributes to the idea that certain aspects

of a myth are more salient in a particular time and culture and that feature stories are primary sources of myth in journalism.

It could also be argued that these authors have mastered the skill of implementing these elements in narrative to achieve the most effective impact. By awarding certain feature stories and not others, the Pulitzers' could reward the inclusion of certain mythic components over others. Some critics would argue that because of the Prize's incestuous nature of having former winners serve as judges, particular myths have been systematically perpetuated over and over by the same group of people, who have similar world-views and expectations. If true, this could suggest that certain components of myths portrayed in a particular manner are deemed exemplary, while others are not because they lack certain qualities. The patterns discovered in this research could serve as a foundation for future studies that could probe and test this observation.

Myth was more readily visible from stories built on a narrative approach, meaning that they were constructed using Wolfe's (1972) four elements of status details, scene-by-scene construction, dialogue, and third-person point of view, among other narrative techniques. This could indicate that feature writing, literary journalism, and subjective journalism rely heavily on myth as a method to entice readers into stories. Past research has assessed a series of single news stories for myth, which would allude that myth is not overtly or abundantly present within a single hard news story. Many straight-news stories are needed in order to examine those works for myth. Conversely, myth thrives within single feature stories as writers include certain details to describe characters, elevate

certain aspects of a story while omitting others, or incorporate certain structures for the most-effective result. In this sense, myth is inseparable from the feature story.

When the narrative in these stories deviated toward a fact-based writing style, elements of myth were more difficult to extract from the text, such as in Amy Ellis Nutt's longer explanations of fishing statistics of marine law in her story about the mysterious sinking of a small fishing ship. This could also support that authors heavily rely on myth in these stories to achieve a variety of effects or that the inclusion of myth in stories makes them more interesting to read.

Journalism often covers negative events, as the events in these stories break the expectation of normalcy that embodies everyday life. It's the extraordinary and the unusual that garners the most attention in these stories, especially when the author's subjective language creates a variety of effects that a straight-news account lacks. For example America and the lives of characters were portrayed as unforgiving and wrought with danger, which contrasts the expectation cemented in many stories that rely on the utopian myth of the "American Dream." The broken expectation of what should happen to those who "play by the rules" is a central facet to these stories and could be used as a primary way authors create drama in these works.

When normalcy was disrupted, administering justice and creating order from chaos was another prominent value observed in the text, which is a primary function of myth. This expectation is recycled in stories where the narrative must arrive at a satisfying conclusion and bring closure to the major complication. Stories were structured as having overarching complications that featured a series of smaller problems that

characters navigated. Characters' decisions about how to face these setbacks determined the flow of the plot and also dictated the archetype the character most mirrored. On the whole, plots seemed to follow a pattern of multiple complications for one resolution, even if those complications did not occur chronologically. Thus, this might indicate that the authors are intentionally weaving problems and complications into the story in a certain way to increase the dramatic effect outside of the chronology of the events as they actually transpired. This could be viewed as a way authors make stories more dramatic than they actually are. One example to support this statement would be Weingarten's 2008 story about a world-class musician who played his violin in a D.C. subway for unappreciative commuters. On the surface, the story might sound unappealing, but the author constructed the story as an "experiment," whose conclusion had one of two outcomes — success or failure. Readers must read the entire story to discover the outcome of the "experiment."

In these winning stories, readers often have an idea of how the story will end, but are unaware of how characters will navigate the problems they encounter. Myth lends itself to typifying certain characters in order for audiences to relate to these characters and either fulfill or break expectations — this uncertainty along with other devices most likely pulls readers deeper into the story.

These Pulitzer feature stories could also be exemplars of how an effective story is crafted from negative events. When negative events occur, someone must be blamed. In these stories, blame sometimes centered on a higher power, which would support the belief that human lives follow a predetermined course and that acceptance of the fates

determined by God, whether positive or negative, are an inescapable part of life. And perhaps the mythic elements discovered are a part of other Pulitzer categories, such as investigative reporting or even categories for photojournalism. These categories could contain the same mythic components discovered in this research — negative themes, scapegoats, or suffering victims, in text and photographic images.

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, archetypes were not static in stories, but characters embodied characteristics of multiple archetypes throughout the duration of the narrative. However, it was clear which archetype characters mirrored most closely. Demonstrating the fluidity of archetypal figures throughout a narrative, victims became heroes as they sought to overcome internal and external forces to reach a primary goal. This triumph could be used by authors as a way to demonstrate how one overcomes obstacles in life.

Values and beliefs illustrated that binary forces were at work, specifically the concepts of right and wrong, good and evil. Religion was often a primary determinant of character's decisions and rational, and served as a way that characters coped with adversity. Other religions have also become central forces in these stories, which could suggest that those who deviate from the majority are more interesting subjects for narratives. Archetypes were "mended" with American values as many characters used religion as a guiding force to endure and triumph over inner and external turmoil. Religious motifs prevailed throughout many of the narratives, which suggests that American culture holds religion in high regard, a gauge of morality, and a way to convey consequences for how characters should respond to adverse situations. With this perspective, myth was working to reinforce certain beliefs and values and used religion as

a way to teach readers lessons about life. Emotional episodes were generally private among male “heroes,” which could suggest that in American culture, grieving in public is demasculinizing.

Themes and emotions experienced were generally negative, with grief being a major focus of these stories, which could be Aristotle’s (2000) theory of the constructs of tragedy in play, thousands of years later, just like the ancient myths formed centuries ago. Such themes of a life and death struggle have a tendency to lend themselves to topics of religion and faith (Shapiro, 2006, p. 56; Moore & Lamb, 2005). Perhaps it could be concluded that American culture or the human race is fixated on negative content, as such content prevails in modern news reports. These stories then would derive their allure from Americans’ fascination with death and could possibly be a way newspapers increase profits and receive awards for covering these often-weighty subjects. This prominence of negative content could also serve as a way newspapers continually convey that life is wrought with danger or that negativity is a worthy topic to cover and read about. Prominent vivid descriptions of death, injury etc., could indicate that American society is fascinated with these issues or simply that these stories sell better than those that focus on positive emotions. Also, negative themes and emotions are signs of complication and problems. In their attempts to illuminate wrongdoings, the writers of these stories cast certain characters as particular archetypes and pit good against evil, order against chaos. These depictions reinforce that struggle and conflict are some of the most interesting aspects of story.

The overwhelming prominence of violence and suffering and the dramatic and vivid descriptions that accompanied those themes might suggest that these are integral facets of American journalism. This idea also supports that awarding stories featuring those elements is an invitation for other journalists to strive to cover similar topics and utilize similar portrayals. This would suggest a perpetual cycle in this time period and culture where deviating from the use of these particular elements would result in boring stories, fewer awards, or declines in readership. The prevalence of these patterns would also mean that they are inescapable as journalists are pressured to create compelling stories under deadline. Myth and its components would be a way that journalists can quickly structure a story and thus, the incorporation of myth is institutionalized in the process of gathering information, organizing it, and presenting it as a cohesive whole.

With a deluge of digital articles available in modern society, Lule (2001) argues that people will have an increased need for myth to order and structure this surplus of information. “In the din of a million voices, the voice of an established storyteller, for better or worse, attains even more status” (p. 199). What are Pulitzer-Prize winning journalists, but established storytellers? These authors will draw the largest audiences and in turn will have more power in shaping the myth that encapsulates the story. Most likely, it will be those with the most Pulitzers to whom newspapers give the “big assignments.” These Pulitzer Prize feature writers could be setting the tone for myth in feature writing for years to come. This observation further supports the study of myth and its function in feature stories, both from a practical perspective of how it influences the craft of writing and for academic purposes about how it can be used to reveal aspects about a culture.

Although the profession of journalism might be in turmoil, the art of storytelling is not, as proof of its endurance for thousands of years. Story enables people to make sense of the world around them. As long as people exist, no matter the medium, myth will still be at work in story. “Storytelling is an essential part of what makes us human ... We need stories because we are stories” (Lule, 2001, p. 4).

Limitations

This study’s purpose was to uncover what mythic components were present in winning Pulitzer feature stories. This study did not examine the effects of mythic techniques writers have on readers, nor the effectiveness of certain mythic components. This study also is not indicative of stories represented outside the sample, but does give some insight into the mythic components in these stories. This study also cannot speak to the effects authors intended or if authors are aware of these elements in their stories. At best, interviews with authors would not be able to gauge intent, but only identify post-hoc rationales for creating those effects and using certain techniques. Identifying these elements is the first stage in assessing how myth and archetype are utilized in winning Pulitzer feature stories.

These 15 stories are not representative of all feature stories, as this study concerns itself with identifying mythic components, assessing how those components were used, and what components and portrayals were prominent in the sample. This purposive sample is indicative of award-winning feature stories that appear in newspapers and alternative weekly publications. Considering this, these findings have the potential to correlate but do not directly apply to feature stories that appear on online-only

publications or in magazines. Also, with assessing 15 of the total 33 entries, no assessments could be made concerning trends, as the sample did not cover a sufficient span of time to comment on changes in the types of mythic components used and the variations in how they were portrayed over time. This research would support future research that seeks to identify trends in myth in Pulitzer Prizes.

Also, though justifications are supplied, this research lacks an external coder or implementation of another methodology because myth is an elusive and implicit concept often open for interpretation, and this study's is a foundational exploration into feature story and myth. This study examined product, not process. Additionally, interviews with journalists might yield that creators of text are unaware of myth and do not intentionally implant mythic components into their work for dramatic effect. To supplant the findings in this study, utilizing another method of text-based analysis, such as framing analysis and triangulating the results via that methodology would be effective.

This research also does not attempt to assess excellence, a relatively new area of study and one that does not have plentiful literature available. Judges were not a part of this study as the literature illustrates that most have a difficult time recalling the best elements of one of hundreds of entries, unless they too are a Pulitzer-winner in the feature category. Judges also indicated that they do not have time to fully ingest and examine each entry. For example, in 1999 a seven-member panel read 159 feature entries (Shepard, 2000). Also editors do shape such stories, but the initial creation and formulation of the ideas presented rest solely with the authors of such pieces. The editors

also are not witnesses to the reporting process that might influence how an element is depicted.

Future Studies

The most immediate expansion of this study would be to assess the entire category of winning Pulitzer feature stories or examine multiple categories of the Pulitzer Prize to confirm, expand, or amend the exploratory concepts unearthed in this study. Such findings could illuminate further how myth is perpetuated, mended, or evolved through time. Much has changed since 1917 — have the mythic components and archetypes discovered in this study varied since the category's inception, and have the ways in which they are mended changed? Also, assessing other award-winning pieces across journalism for mythic structures and components, such as the American Society of Magazine Editors, would expand the applicability of this study to magazine writing, which is different from newspaper feature writing according to journalism awards, though both share similarities.

As stated earlier a text-based analysis, such as framing analysis, could serve to triangulate these findings, as myth is primarily studied via text. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, myth and frames share many structuring abilities as well as theoretical implications. Van Gorp (2010) proposed that both inductive and deductive approaches be implemented in framing analysis to decrease subjectivity; a similar approach could be applied to future research concerning myth in journalism. Participant observation might be an interesting way to unearth how myth is lifted from source material and interviews, and how it makes its way onto the printed page. Lule (2001, 1988) was a journalism

practitioner-turned myth researcher and identified news myths based on his experience as a reporter and academic.

From a quantitative approach, this study could benefit from a mixed-methods strategy, which could seek to collect data about what dramatic techniques correlate to reader engagement and how those results might or might not correlate with the mythic components discovered in texts. These are just a few suggestions for continuing the research on the stories that we shape, and in turn, shape us.

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Glossary of Terms

Archetype — “Original figures or frameworks, powerful patterns, models to imitate and adapt” (Lule, 1988, p. 30). These are contained within myth.

Archetypal figures — Categories of character types who are the actors in stories.

Feature story — A genre of journalism that recounts “tales of human experience” (Shapiro, 2005, p. 7).

Frame — “A central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ganem, 1991, p. 11).

Literary Journalism — A form of writing that “seeks to communicate facts through narrative storytelling and literary techniques” (Royal and Tankard, 2004, p. 82).

Mend — How a culture imbues a myth with its own beliefs and values, while keeping the overarching structure intact, and in turn patches “holes” in understanding with aspects of the culture (Bird & Dardenne, 1988).

Motif — Prevailing patterns within a story that are used to achieve a certain effect.

Myth — In this research, myth does not refer to an untruth. It is an overarching structure that forms “a symbolic narrative that attempts to explain and give meaning to practices and beliefs” (Lule, 2001, p. 101). A myth is a “sacred, societal story that draws from archetypal figures and forms to offer exemplary models for human life” (Lule, 2001, p. 15).

Pattern — Atkinson (1995) defines pattern as “a design, model, or plan that is repeated over and over again,” “regularly” and “predictably.” “Separation-initiation-return” and “birth-death-rebirth” are examples of patterns (p. 26).

Plot — The events that progress the story; the series of complications that characters face throughout a narrative, the developments that follow, and the resolution, which dissolves tension (Franklin, 1994).

Repetition — “an aid to our memory” and instrumental in influencing how humans remember things. Repetition helps us make sense of patterns. (Atkinson, 1995, p. 22).

Salience — “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Story — Story is “a sequence of actions that occur when a sympathetic character encounters a complicating situation that he confronts and solves” (Franklin, 1994, p. 71).

Symbol — Jacobi defines *symbol* as “a sign, object, or thing that binds together two usually very different terms” (Jacobi, 1959, p. 24). For example, a dove symbolizes peace.

Theme — What the story means or what the story is about. Kuypers (2010) defined theme as “the subject of discussion, or that which is the subject of the thought expressed” (p. 302).

Appendix

The language used on the Pulitzer Prize website to describe the sample of winning feature stories studied is presented below for reference. These stories dating from 1997-2012 can read online at <http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Feature-Writing>.

2012 Eli Sanders of The Stranger, a Seattle (Wash.) weekly

For his haunting story of a woman who survived a brutal attack that took the life of her partner, using the woman's brave courtroom testimony and the details of the crime to construct a moving narrative.

2011 Amy Ellis Nutt of The Star-Ledger, Newark, NJ

For her deeply probing story of the mysterious sinking of a commercial fishing boat in the Atlantic Ocean that drowned six men.

2010 Gene Weingarten of The Washington Post

For his haunting story about parents, from varying walks of life, who accidentally kill their children by forgetting them in cars.

2009 Lane DeGregory of St. Petersburg Times

For her moving, richly detailed story of a neglected little girl, found in a roach-infested room, unable to talk or feed herself, who was adopted by a new family committed to her nurturing.

2008 Gene Weingarten of The Washington Post

For his chronicling of a world-class violinist who, as an experiment, played beautiful music in a subway station filled with unheeding commuters.

2007 Andrea Elliott of The New York Times

For her intimate, richly textured portrait of an immigrant imam striving to find his way and serve his faithful in America.

2006 Jim Sheeler of Rocky Mountain News, Denver

For his poignant story on a Marine major who helps the families of comrades killed in Iraq cope with their loss and honor their sacrifice.

2005 Julia Keller of Chicago Tribune

For her gripping, meticulously reconstructed account of a deadly 10-second tornado that ripped through Utica, Illinois.

2004 No award

2003 Sonia Nazario of Los Angeles Times

For "Enrique's Journey," her touching, exhaustively reported story of a Honduran boy's perilous search for his mother who had migrated to the United States.

2002 Barry Siegel of Los Angeles Times

For his humane and haunting portrait of a man tried for negligence in the death of his son, and the judge who heard the case.

2001 Tom Hallman Jr. of The Oregonian, Portland

For his poignant profile of a disfigured 14-year old boy who elects to have life-threatening surgery in an effort to improve his appearance.

2000 J.R. Moehringer of Los Angeles Times

For his portrait of Gee's Bend, an isolated river community in Alabama where many descendants of slaves live, and how a proposed ferry to the mainland might change it.

1999 Angelo B. Henderson of The Wall Street Journal

For his portrait of a druggist who is driven to violence by his encounters with armed robbery, illustrating the lasting effects of crime.

1998 Thomas French of St. Petersburg Times

For his detailed and compassionate narrative portrait of a mother and two daughters slain on a Florida vacation, and the three-year investigation into their murders.

1997 Lisa Pollak of The Baltimore Sun

For her compelling portrait of a baseball umpire who endured the death of a son while knowing that another son suffers from the same deadly genetic disease.