at Fordham. The London conference's promotional literature bemoaned contemporary publishers, who would never have run the work of the great early nineteenth-century British essayists William Hazlitt or Charles Lamb. Both of those writers defined the experiential essay, creating a fashion for them. For instance, one of Hazlitt's most famous personal essays was about watching a fight.

Of course, an increased interest in the history and a new sense of the value of the long reported piece are not the same thing as an audience that will buy the stuff. Is there, or will there be, sustained appetite for long, true stories on the web? Or will the only true successes be those of old media megastars like Krakauer, who just happened to be publishing a crackling revenge tragedy involving another famous older writer?

One reason to bet against Byliner et al is that magazines bundle together a range of pieces. The "good" pieces—often the ones that don't make "most e-mailed" lists—are shored up by the more digestible articles, in a single issue of a magazine. Stand-alone singles will have to rise and fall on their own popularity.

Are enough people eager to read well-written yarns when nonfiction is not selling so well generally? When so many of us come home tired of reading the Internet all day at work? I think the answer is yes. I believe the best of these enterprises will succeed, that this work will find an audience and has an audience. I can't prove it—it's a bet of the heart.

For years, traditional publishers have been notoriously contemptuous of essay collections, short-story collections, and even novellas (by anyone except Philip Roth!). Long-short form/short-long form doesn't sell, they say. The sales numbers behind some of these singles would seem to at least begin to prove them wrong. The people who are taking chances with new forms and lengths are more likely to succeed than the ones who are pushing old formats and forms that readers are turning away from. Better to double-down on the singles. **CJR**

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GUATEMALA POSTCARD CONNOR BOALS

Pirate Radio, Mayan Style

Indigenous stations want to come in from the cold

WHEN YOU GET TO SUMPANGO, IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS OF GUATEMALA, you won't be able to find Radio Ixchel on your own. This is partially by design: in the eyes of the law, they are running a criminal operation.

There's no sign posted outside the building that houses the station. Other than the indiscreet donation box by the window, this looks like the entrance to someone's home. Inside is a dusty, open courtyard where chickens peck at scraps and an ornery goose honks.

Angélica Cubur Sul opens the door to the studio, clad in a traditional Mayan multicolored blouse. She's a "locutora" here at the station. You could call her a DJ, but she does much more. Inside, another woman runs the mixer as a Mayan herbalist provides instructions in Kaqchikel, the local dialect, on what local flora listeners can use to treat indigestion. The door is thin and the goose is still honking outside. Sul taps out a script on an ancient PC for her top-of-the-hour newscast.

Guatemala still bears scars from the civil war that gripped the country for more than thirty years, ending finally in 1996. The government mainly relied on terror to suppress indigenous populations from supporting the leftist guerrillas. The Guatemalan Archbishop's Office for Human Rights estimates that the Guatemalan military and paramilitary forces committed over 90 percent of the atrocities. Indigenous people were almost always the target. Mass graves are still being unearthed.

"Radio has been important in Guatemala for decades," says Mark Camp, director of the Guatemala Radio Project for Cultural Survival, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of indigenous groups. "During the civil war, radio played a really important part for the guerrillas to get their message out to the people."

So when the peace accords were drafted in 1996, a specific clause was included to allow the mostly illiterate, indigenous population to operate community radio stations. Station advocates argue that the constitution's guarantee of free expression and portions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples further support the outlets' operation. "It says in Article 16: 'Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages,'" Camp says, quoting from the declaration. "Guatemala was one of the countries to push this through."

But despite these legal underpinnings, the stations' right to broadcast has not been formally enshrined in domestic law. Congress has been hesitant to sanction the low-power outlets; during campaign season, politicians rely on commercial radio stations owned mostly by conglomerates that don't want a law that legitimizes their competition. The defiant, unlicensed stations prefer to call themselves

Broadcast pioneers Angélica Cubur Sul and Anselmo Xunic outside Radio Ixchel in Sumpango

"alegal," a termed coined by the community to highlight the ambiguity of their legal status.

Radio Ixchel, like most of the thousands of unlicensed stations operating in Guatemala, is staffed by volunteers and funded through the goodwill of its listeners. It broadcasts sixteen hours a day of alcoholism counseling, health advice, and children's programming—plus lots of marimba.

According to Danielle Deluca, the program officer for the Guatemala Radio Project, if a community radio station wants to operate legally, it would have to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to purchase a frequency license in a government auction. Such a sum is out of the question in a village like Sumpango, where laborers make $4 a day and it's a struggle just to scrape together Ixchel's $250-a-month budget.

So what's a station director like Radio Ixchel's Anselmo Xunic to do? With somewhere between 5,000 and 8,000 listeners tuning in every day, he's determined to keep broadcasting on a frequency that he doesn't own.

In 2006, police confiscated Radio Ixchel's homemade transmitter and equipment, and arrested Xunic and some of his staff. Within months, the town had chipped in enough to get them back on the air. Charges were dropped. "We don't blame the police," Xunic says, pointing out that the station has used its broadcast to help police track down criminals. "They use the station to help maintain peace, but when they get the call, they have to do their job and shut us down."

The unlicensed stations will live under this threat until Guatemala's congress acts. A bill to make the stations legal is on the voting schedule, but there is no timeline for an actual vote. In August, indigenous activists met with Roberto Alejos, the president of congress, to press for passage, but nothing concrete was resolved. "It's a high priority of the congress to reform the telecommunications law to include community radio," Alejos says. "But it does not have sufficient support yet. The risk of losing it in the plenary session is still very real."

Cultural Survival's Mark Camp remains hopeful. "You have people from all these community stations getting on the bus, traveling to Guatemala City, waiting in line and telling their congressmen, 'Hey, I'd like you to support this bill,'" he says. "That's revolutionary. This is only fifteen years after you couldn't talk politics for fear that you were going to wake up dead."

In the meantime, Radio Ixchel and its sister stations will continue to operate in legal limbo, their homemade towers dotting the skylines of their tiny villages. "If they take our equipment, we will buy more, because this is something that the people need," says Anselmo Xunic. "We don't have fear, because we know we aren't breaking the law." **CJR**

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