

Man Machine Poem: Viewing the Tragically Hip's final tour through a post-humanitarianism
lens

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Abstract

In late 2015, Gord Downie, lead singer of the iconic Canadian rock band the Tragically Hip was diagnosed with glioblastoma, a terminal brain cancer. Some eight months later, on August 20, 2016, the band completed its final concert tour in its home town of Kingston, Ontario. One of the many noteworthy features of the tour was the extensive fan-based fundraising efforts for brain cancer research that accompanied it. In recent years some commentators have characterized this type of emotional outpouring as a form of ethical ambivalence or post-humanitarianism reflecting a sensibility of pity that valorizes a consumerist oriented form of short-term low-intensity agency as opposed to some more authentic forms of empathy. A leading figure in developing the concept of post-humanitarianism is Lilie Chouliaraki. Her 2013 book, *The Ironic Spectator*, investigates four different aspects of contemporary humanitarian communication – appeals, celebrity, concerts, and news – to examine the ethical ambivalence underlying post-humanitarianism. Drawing on Chouliaraki’s claims about the influence of celebrity and news reporting in fostering post-humanitarianism, this Major Research Paper analyzes newspaper reporting of the Hip’s *Man Machine Poem* tour in order to assess how news reporting of celebrity and suffering is structured when the celebrity is the suffering other.

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Introduction

Humanitarian action tends to be understood as a “charitable ethic of ‘giving’” that is based on the sufferers’ “status as victims and their capacity to generate pity” (Gordon & Donini, 2015, p. 82). However, a shift in this view is hypothesized to have coincided with the increasing pervasiveness of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and, concomitantly, the ability to disseminate information faster and more effectively (Gordon & Donini, 2015). Since the 1950s, crises and suffering have been regularly broadcast on a global stage, exposing viewers to suffering without them being directly connected to the sufferers, and simultaneously revealing their inability to attenuate said suffering (Orgad & Seu, 2014). The gap manifested between suffering and audience, it is claimed, presents suffering as a spectacle that audiences view from a distance thereby creating a situation wherein the suffering is removed from reality and the audience is disconnected from it (Chouliaraki, 2013). This hypothesized gap has led Chouliaraki (2010, p. 107) to claim that the contemporary “emotional repertoire of pity” associated with humanitarianism “is no longer inspired by an intellectual agenda but momentarily engages us in practices of playful consumerism” that has, in turn, given rise to a post-humanitarian sensibility.

Chouliaraki (2013) investigates four different aspects of contemporary humanitarian communication – appeals, celebrity, concerts, and news – to examine the impact each has on the dichotomy between audience and suffering. She posits that appeals are a communicative practice of using language and imagery to produce an emotional response to suffering, catalyzing action towards the suffering of others. In her view, encouraging humanitarian action by relying on emotions such as guilt, empathy, and indignation is not an authentic way to portray suffering because these emotions are used to manipulate the spectator by telling them how to “[feel], [think] and [act] about vulnerable others” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 56). She further contends that,

while attaching a famous name to a cause gives it more power by personalizing the issue and evoking emotional responses from audiences, contemporary celebrity humanitarianism relies too heavily on the theatrical and performative elements of celebrity. The former entails celebrities turning suffering into a spectacle that is presented on a stage that, in turn, creates a gap between the actual suffering of others and the audience who views the spectacle whereas the latter refers to the celebrity's ability to perform or act out the suffering of others as if it is her or his own (Chouliaraki, 2013).

Chouliaraki (2013) expounds on the concept of authenticity by examining rock concerts and charismatic rock stars. Comparing the cases of Live Aid in 1985 and Live 8 in 2005,¹ she maintains that the spectacle of concerts draws the public's attention to the suffering of distant others through the charisma of rock stars without those attending and/or watching the concert actually engaging with the humanity of the sufferer. This said, it is important to note that in discussing celebrity involvement, Chouliaraki employs two terms – suffering, and the suffering other – interchangeably. This is unfortunate because it fosters interpretative ambiguity insofar as engaging with suffering is not the same as engaging with the suffering other. Consider for example, a starving child in an impoverished or destitute community. Engaging with 'the suffering' in this instance might involve donating to hunger relief or partaking any number of other charitable activities contributing to alleviating the suffering of the child. By contrast, engaging with 'the suffering other' might involve traveling to the affected community to interact

¹ Live Aid consisted of dual concerts (one in London and one in Philadelphia) that were held simultaneously in July in 1985 to raise funds for the Ethiopian famine. Live 8, which took place in 2005, consisted of a series of rock concerts that took place in ten cities around the world on the same day with the objective of putting an end to third world debt (Chouliaraki, 2013).

directly with the child and her/his family. The fourth aspect of humanitarian communication examined by Chouliaraki (2013) is news. In her view, news brings distant suffering closer to the viewer, providing a stage for this suffering to be viewed from one's own television, for example. She maintains that the combination of images and language used by broadcast news creates meaning and evokes an emotional response from the viewer.

Using the Tragically Hip's *Man Machine Poem* tour as a basis of analysis, this major research paper investigates the hypothesized link between celebrity, news, and post-humanitarian sensibility. The tour was announced shortly after the band publicly revealed, in May 2016, that Gord Downie had been diagnosed with glioblastoma (King, 2016). As an iconic Canadian rock band, the Tragically Hip have been hailed as giving "a voice to Canada's land, its history and, at times, its official winter sport" (Fraser, 2016, para. 8). The announcement of Downie's diagnosis and the plans for a final concert tour brought many Canadians together as a nation, playing on the notion of national pride. The farewell tour also gave a voice to different humanitarian causes and, principally, brain cancer research. For instance, the Gord Downie Fund for Brain Cancer Research² was set up at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto and received more than \$1 million in donations within the first six weeks of its August 2016 launch ("Canadians contribute \$1 million to Gord Downie fund for brain cancer research", 2016, para. 6).³ In addition to the band's fans, members of the Canadian rock band Rush announced that they

² See, <https://donate.sunnybrook.ca/braincancerresearch>

³ As of October 17, 2017 \$1.8 million had been raised. See, <https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=about-gord-downie-fund-brain-cancer>

would donate \$40,000 to the fund (Kaufman, 2016), and Hockey Hall of Fame member and fellow Kingston native, Doug Gilmour, asked his fans to help him raise money to donate to the Fund.

A central assumption underpinning this study is that these actions, and others, by the band's fans constitute a form of humanitarian engagement insofar as they were aimed at alleviating the suffering of others (i.e., those diagnosed with brain cancer). This said, it seems equally plausible that the donation activities surrounding the band's final tour may also be illustrative of a post-humanitarian sensibility. In her investigation of post-humanitarian sensibilities, Chouliaraki focuses heavily on the gap between the celebrity and the suffering other. The case of the Tragically Hip's *Man Machine Poem* Tour presents a unique scenario for examining this hypothesized gap because in this instance Gord Downie was both a charismatic celebrity and an individual suffering from brain cancer; an 'other' who is known para-socially by fans of the Tragically Hip. To this end, my study uses Chouliaraki's focus on news media as a benchmark for identifying the meanings and emotions evoked about the Hip's farewell concerts in articles published in local newspapers from cities that hosted stops on the *Man Machine Poem* Tour. The sampled articles are analyzed with the aim of identifying examples of three narrative structures – cohesive structure, clause structure, process structure – that Chouliaraki maintains 'perform' news stories.

In order to investigate this unique situation, the project was guided by the following research question: *What are the implications for Chouliaraki's theorization of suffering in post-humanitarianism when the celebrity is also the suffering other?*

In order to answer this question, a preliminary content analysis was conducted using ten newspaper articles chosen from local newspapers serving cities in which a concert from the *Man*

Machine Poem Tour was held (see Table 1.1).⁴ This exercise was then followed by a discourse analysis of the articles.

Table 1.1: Cities on the Man Machine Poem Tour

City	Name of Newspaper	Article Title	Publication Date	Category
Victoria, BC	Times Colonist	<i>For Tragically Hip fans, a sigh of relief</i>	July 22, 2016	Canadiana
Vancouver, BC	Vancouver Sun	<i>Review: Tragically Hip's penultimate Vancouver show no dress rehearsal</i>	July 2, 2016	Emotional approach/fan response
Edmonton, AB	Edmonton Journal	<i>'We arrive alive': Utter magic, plenty of tears as Tragically Hip play Rexall Place on final tour</i>	July 29, 2016	Outlier
Calgary, AB	Calgary Herald	<i>Canadian icons Tragically Hip shine at an emotional Saddledome show</i>	August 1, 2016	Canadiana
Winnipeg, MB	Winnipeg Sun	<i>Tragically Hip deliver powerful poignant farewell to Winnipeg fans</i>	August 5, 2016	Emotional approach/fan response
London, ON	London Free Press	<i>Singer Gord Downie and his Hip bandmates left it all on stage Monday in their fond farewell to London fans</i>	August 8, 2016	Emotional approach/fan response
Toronto, ON	Toronto Star	<i>Tragically Hip wraps first Toronto show of 'Man Machine Poem' tour</i>	August 10, 2016	Canadiana
Hamilton, ON	Hamilton Spectator	<i>GORD DOWNIE: "I've got to go, it's been a pleasure doing business with you"</i>	August 16, 2016	Emotional approach/fan response
Ottawa, ON	Ottawa Citizen	<i>Review: Tragically Hip give fans last chance to celebrate Canada's band</i>	August 18, 2016	Canadiana
Kingston, ON	Kingston Whig-Standard	<i>The Tragically Hip exist all around Kingston</i>	August 20, 2016	Outlier

Content analysis is a method of collecting data about opinions and themes that is based on analyzing written, spoken, and visual forms of communication (Stambor, 2005). This allows the researcher to systemically examine the data on two different levels: (i) themes and main ideas; and (ii) contextual information (Mayring, 2000). By examining these two factors the

⁴ The tour ended on August 20, 2016, with hype from the tour carrying through until mid-September at which time focus shifted towards Downie's *Secret Path* initiative. The latter was a multi-media project that included a graphic novel, album, and animated film adaptation honouring Chani Wenjack, a 12 year old Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) boy who froze to death trying to escape a residential school and return to his home. The *Secret Path's* goal is to teach Canadians about his story and the history of residential schools (Talaga, 2016).

researcher can address language, meaning, communication techniques individually, or simultaneously, and in so doing make inferences about the topic of interest (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Systemically characterizing the data in this manner allows the researcher to observe frequencies such as the number of times certain words are used or the number of times the author relies on emotive writing techniques which, in turn, enables one to identify which content is being emphasized in the text (Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

For example, Patterson, Hilton & Weishaar's (2015) use content analysis to quantify the number of times e-cigarette regulations were mentioned in 104 articles from eight UK newspapers and three Scottish newspapers in the period spanning January 1st 2013 and December 31st 2014. Their objective was to identify whether the regulations were cited in reference to support or opposition, the rationales used to argue against e-cigarette regulation, and the specific regulatory position to which the rationales were tied. Their findings suggest that despite the newspaper coverage received, when compared to other health issues the e-cigarette regulation debate comprised only a small percentage of the newspaper coverage between 2013 and 2014.

In an effort to develop a conceptual model of the effects of working the night shift, West, Rudge & Mapedzahama (2016) use content analysis to examine responses from 1355 surveys completed by Register Nurses who were doing night work from June 2011 to December 2011. Their findings suggest that the demands of the organizational and clinical environments in which nurses work are related to the time of day that the work takes place. These authors conclude that there must be a consideration based on a 24/7 schedule because the nurses' night work affects the day work they also are required to do when employed on a rotating shift schedule.

For my research project, content analysis was used as a mechanism for identifying dominant themes in the sampled articles, and to classify them accordingly. I conducted the content analysis manually. A first detailed reading of the sampled articles identified three main themes: Reporting on How Canadians are affected, Emotional Approach, and Outliers. During a second reading, I used a yellow highlighter to identify and mark every mention of Canada or Canadian related activities and/or references (i.e., Canadiana).⁵ This process also allowed for identification of, and the frequency with which, the sampled articles mentioned how Downie's diagnosis was affecting Canada. During a third detailed reading I used a green highlighter to mark every instance in which the authors referred to emotions, or used emotional words/phrases. This enabled me to identify the writing techniques used to evoke emotional investment on the part of the newspaper readers.

Once these instances were identified, I conducted a discourse analysis of the surrounding text to examine the meanings being conveyed by each mention of 'Canadiana' and 'emotions'. Chouliaraki's four discursive structures – narrative, cohesive, clause, and process – were used to guide this analysis insofar as they contribute to identifying how the sampled news stories were structured. Discourse can be defined in two different ways. First, as the "study of the social text" and, second, as the "study of social reality as discursively constructed and maintained" (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, p. 1126). In the former, discourses are used as a linguistic tool to understand organizations and phenomena, while the latter looks at discourse in a social context taking into account its social and political implications (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). These definitions stem from Foucault's notion that language (combined with discourses) inform social practices by

⁵ 'Canadiana' refers to mentions of Canada or any activities and/or references that are distinctively Canadian.

“arrang[ing] and naturaliz[ing] the social world in a specific way” (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, p. 1126). For the purpose of this study, I define discourse in line with the first definition – discourse as a tool to understand phenomena rather than its social and political implications.

Discourse analysis is a technique used to analyze sections of writing and their context in order to understand how meaning is created based on the choice of language (Mozzon-McPherson, 2013). It allows the researcher to analyze written texts in terms of the language used as well as the social context in which the words were written (Taylor, 2013). In analyzing the texts, the researcher gains insight into the author’s opinions and feelings, as well as the society in which the text was written. It is an appropriate tool for the task at hand because it allows one to identify the meanings and emotions evoked in the articles comprising the sample by looking at styles of speaking, grammatical structure, the choice of certain words over others, as well as underlying assumptions that are not directly implied by the text (Taylor, 2013).

Schindel & Given (2013) use discourse analysis to examine newspaper discourses surrounding pharmacists providing prescriptions in Alberta in order to understand societal views about about this issue. Having looked at 66 texts from two national Canadian newspapers and five local Alberta newspapers from January 2006 and December 2008, they identified five central themes pertaining to the opinions about pharmacists having the ability to prescribe medications. These five themes were: qualifications, diagnosis, patient safety, physician support, and conflict of interest. The results of their analysis point to the presence of tensions between notions of pharmacists as qualified to prescribe drugs and notions opposing this view. This leads them to argue for further education about the roles that can be played by both pharmacists and physicians when it comes to prescribing medications.

Oreshkina & Lester (2013) use discourse analysis to examine newspaper reporting about the education of children with disabilities. Having looked at 32 newspaper articles from the *Teacher's Gazette* from January 2010 to April 2011, they identified two discursive patterns. One suggesting a need for a special approach and a segregated educational system for children with disabilities, the other maintaining that children with disabilities are capable of attending regular school and, therefore, barriers to their doing so should be removed. Based on these findings, they conclude that discourses relating to segregated educational systems reinforce the view of disabilities as a medical problem, while discourses about removing barriers speak to the view that children with disabilities are 'normal'.

In the next section the gap between suffering and spectator that is created by communications technologies, and the way in which it contributes to a post-humanitarian sensibility is further explored. Chouliaraki's analysis of news reporting and the use of the three narrative structures – process structure, clause structure, cohesive structure – are expanded upon to illuminate the link between the structuring of news reporting when the celebrity is the suffering other.

1. Literature Review

Throughout the last 50 years, the manner in which the concept of humanitarianism has been understood has undergone a notable epistemological shift. In its purest form, humanitarianism is understood as a commitment to aid and show compassion towards those in need in order to better humanity (Orgad & Seu, 2014). Proponents of the notion of post-humanitarianism suggest that humanitarianism has become self-serving (Gordon & Donini, 2015), with “the representation of suffering disembedded from discourses of morality and [relying] on each spectator's personal

judgment of the cause for action” (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 120). Seen in this light, the post-humanitarian sensibility is characterized by a shift in focus away from a charitable ethic of giving aimed at alleviating suffering, toward a more self-serving orientation emphasizing foremost how engaging in a humanitarian cause makes one feel.

Central to Chouliaraki’s claims about post-humanitarianism is the notion of a mediated gap created by ICTs such as television between spectator and distant suffering . Echoing this view, Boltanski (1999) argues that this mediated gap shelters the viewer because s/he is “not in the same situation as the unfortunate” thus becoming “a passive voyeur, separated from the capacity to act” (p. 153). Chouliaraki (2006, 2008) hypothesizes that the mediated gap is characterized by a paradox of technology that has ICTs bringing the suffering other and the spectator closer together while simultaneously positioning the distant suffering as fiction or spectacle not requiring immediate action. It is this process, she claims, that renders the spectator a passive voyeur.

Chouliaraki (2006) expands on the idea of viewing suffering through a television and the impact this has on the spectators’ ability to respond to said suffering in her book *The Spectatorship of Suffering*. According to her, whether the representation of suffering on television encourages spectators to act depends on how the scene of suffering is constructed. Put simply, the construction of suffering can potentially pull at the spectators’ emotions, with its representation either “bring[ing] a tear to a spectator’s eye” or motivating the spectator to act in a way that contributes to alleviating the suffering (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 7). She further argues that the catalyzing agent in such instances rests in whether news discourse presents the suffering as “worthy or unworthy of the spectators’ attention” (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 7).

Building on this view, and as noted in the previous section, Chouliaraki (2013) investigates four different types of contemporary humanitarian communication – appeals, celebrity, concerts, and news – examining the impact each has on the audience/suffering dichotomy, and the seeming ethical ambivalence or post-humanitarian sensibility, it fosters. This gap, she claims, is reinforced when suffering is presented as a spectacle, with the audience viewing it from a distance which, in turn, creates a situation wherein the suffering is removed from reality and the audience is disconnected from it. As Chouliaraki (2013) points out, viewing distant suffering in this manner raises questions about the moral responsibility towards the suffering other, including: *Is the spectator reacting to the suffering itself, or the spectacle that is being presented? Does the distance between spectator and sufferer emphasize the structure of the spectacle rather than the morality and emotional response of the spectator?* In attempting to answer these questions she anchors her assessments in the concept of authenticity.⁶ Adhering to an understanding that entails acting in a way that is true to oneself and does not rely on external influences, she defines ‘authentic’ humanitarianism as humanitarian action that is not impacted by external influences, and is based solely on the need of the other.

Looking at the notion of celebrity and its relation to post-humanitarianism, Chouliaraki argues that celebrities have the ability to present suffering in a way that “[touches] our hearts and minds”, in a manner that contributes to producing post-humanitarian publics (2013, p. 78). The performative element of celebrity is manifest in the celebrity’s ability to perform or act out

⁶ The definition of authenticity used by Chouliaraki echoes that put forward by the Frankfurt School. Adorno (1984, p. 398) defines authenticity as work where “the domination of the natural-material moment is mitigated by the fact that, through the principle of domination, the repressed finds a way of expressing itself.” For him, authenticity “requires a critical stance, not detached from the immediate world, but not identical to it either” (Phelan, 1990, p. 43).

the suffering as if it is her or his own. This ability, she argues, introduces theatricality into the realm of humanitarianism with the celebrity performing the suffering on a stage in the form of a spectacle that takes place in front of a watching audience. This, in turn, impedes the spectators' ability to distinguish between who the celebrity is offstage and the persona that she performs onstage inasmuch as it allows the celebrity to 'personify' the suffering she is representing onstage as an "authentic articulation of her own emotional interiority" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 89). It is precisely this ability of the celebrity to perform the suffering as if it was her/his own that rests at the centre of the debate surrounding the authenticity of celebrity humanitarianism (Chouliaraki, 2013).

Chouliaraki (2013) acknowledges that whether, and/or the extent to which, celebrity involvement has a positive (or negative) effect on the experience of humanitarianism is very much contested terrain. Critics view celebrity involvement in humanitarianism "as an inauthentic expression of aspirational performance" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 83). They contend that the celebritization of humanitarianism "displaces the focus on suffering towards a focus on celebrity" and "displaces public action in favour of personal diplomacy" (p 79). According to this view, celebrities are used to represent those who are suffering, but they have not been elected to be this voice, and therefore do not genuinely represent the suffering (Dieter & Kumar, 2008). Chouliaraki goes further to state that an "over-reliance" on celebrity runs the risk of creating a focus on peoples' individual emotions rather than on the suffering itself. In other words, one focuses more on how donating to a cause makes one feel than on the suffering itself. The critique advanced asserts that by using celebrity, humanitarianism is turned into a spectacle – it is broadcast on a public stage to an audience, and there is the risk that the moral content of the

cause is ignored. Put simply, the focus on the celebrity takes away from the cause they are said to be supporting thereby reducing the complexity of the problem (Chouliaraki, 2012). Gord Downie presents a unique case in this regard precisely because he was a celebrity representing suffering, but instead of 'personifying' the suffering of another, the suffering was in fact his own.

The division between those who see celebrity as a positive element of humanitarianism and those who see it as having detrimental effects is evident in the literature surrounding celebrity humanitarianism. Brockington and Henson (2015) refer to the activities celebrities undertake for causes as "celebrity advocacy" (p. 432).⁷ They state that many see the use of celebrity in a negative light, "[condemning] the inequality with which it is structurally associated and which they deem it to perpetuate", while others go as far to suggest "celebrity advocates might in fact be 'sadists' delighting in their own good fortune in an unequal world order" (Brockington & Henson, 2015, p. 434). Still others worry that celebrities shift the focus away from the suffering's root cause, possibly overlooking the complexity of the cause, as well as missing the point of the advocacy (Goodman, 2010; Richey & Ponte, 2008). Another worry with the use of celebrity is that celebrities bring with them a link to "celebrity culture, consumer culture, and the values of self-interest" (Darnton & Kirk, 2011, p. 10). In sum, celebrities have the ability to garner media attention, but this attention might be directed towards the celebrity themselves rather than the cause they are supporting (Brockington & Henson, 2015).

On the other side of the pendulum are those who see celebrity involvement as having a positive effect on the humanitarian causes. Dwight (2016), for instance, states that celebrities

⁷ Brockington & Henson (2015) use the term "celebrity advocacy" and although it is not the same term as celebrity humanitarianism, the concepts are similar and therefore their work on celebrity advocacy is useful for the discussion.

have “visibility, influence, and resources” that regular citizens do not, and this allows them to make a difference in humanitarian efforts (p. 20). Proponents of this view maintain that celebrities have the potential to “bridge the gap” and bring humanitarian causes closer to the spectator by “[inspiring] advocacy and [effecting] change in a way nobody else can” (Dwight, 2016, p. 20).

The pervasiveness of social media has altered the ways in which fans experience and engage with celebrities (Bennett, 2012; Harris 2014). In terms of music, one no longer has to be physically present at a concert in order to participate in, and feel part of, the event (Bennett, 2012). For example, social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook allow those who are not physically present to nonetheless experience the concert remotely via messages, photos, audio recordings, and videos posted to the Internet by those in attendance. Bennett (2012) maintains that these forms of mediated engagement provide an opportunity for individuals to feel part of the “real-time live experience” (p. 545) and, to be part of the “powerful meeting” (p. 553).

Para-social interaction also helps explain audience reaction to celebrity. This phenomenon refers to the “illusion of face-to-face relationship[s]” between the spectator/the audience and the performer that often is created by media platforms⁸ (Horton & Wohl, 2009, p. 215). It takes into account the theatrical nature of performance to help explain how the audience engages with the performer. What is central to the para-social relationship is that the interaction is generally one-sided; the performer controls the interaction and the conversation with little

⁸ While Horton & Wohl (2009) focus on television personalities and their ability to connect with the audience through an illusion of intimacy, the concepts and tools they discuss can be applied to other audiences, not just television audiences.

opportunity for reciprocal engagement from the audience (Horton & Wohl, 2009).

The phenomenon of para-social interaction accounts for the sense of intimacy created by a performer with an audience comprised of total strangers. A number of techniques are used to foster this illusion of intimacy including camera angles that zoom in on the performer to give the illusion that s/he is coming closer to the audience, eye contact between the performer and audience, and addressing the audience personally with phrases such as *I'm so glad you guys are able to be here tonight and share this with me* (Horton & Wohl, 2009).

According to Horton & Wohl (2009), the sharing of past experiences adds even more meaning to the performance. They argue that, for the performer to connect with the audience in a way that creates this sense of intimacy, s/he “should have heart, should be sincere, his performance should be real and warm” (p. 220). On top of this, if the performer balances private and public life the audience feels as though they are getting glimpses of the performer’s private life and are, therefore, more intimately connected to the performer. Hence, in fostering para-social interactions it is important that the performer’s private life not be kept completely secret, but instead that fans feel as though they are witnessing part of it.

For Chouliaraki (2013), news provides an opportunity to present distant suffering on a stage by bringing it closer to the viewers/readers and inviting them to respond to it. She sees news media as having the ability to create a sense of connectivity to the distant suffering, and therefore encouraging action. According to this view, journalism and news reporting play an important function in representing suffering and in encouraging the audience to act on it. The images and stories that are reported by journalists “situate events within symbolic regimes of emotion and action so as to make a specific demand on their publics: to take a stance or do

something” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p 140). An important function of the news is its ability to engage the audience and get them to care about the event being reported.⁹ This requires the news to have a certain aesthetic- “specific combinations of language, image, and sound” to create meaning in the reporting (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 152).

In examining the link between celebrity, suffering, and the structuring of news reporting, it is important to understand the values that must be present for an event to qualify as newsworthy. Language is an important factor in creating news value (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Emphasizing the authority of the source, or using stronger vocabulary is one linguistic technique used to make something newsworthy. References to emotion are also considered a useful technique in creating news value. For example, describing the survivors of an accident as *devastated* adds emotion to the story and helps to evoke emotion in the reader (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Images are another important factor in creating news value. The context of the image and the people in it (where they are photographed and who they are photographed with), as well as the technical considerations (e.g the focus of the photograph, how much light is allowed in, the shutter speed, etc.) impact whether a story is considered to be newsworthy (Bednarek & Caple, 2012)

How a news story is structured impacts how the suffering is represented. Therefore, to understand the aesthetic of news and its ability to create meaning and engage the audience, Chouliaraki examines the narrative structure (i.e., the authority of the journalist), the cohesive structure (i.e., how the information is structured in the narrative), the clause structure (i.e., how

⁹ Chouliaraki focuses on broadcast media and live-blogging. Although she does not deal specifically with newspapers, her work nonetheless focuses on narrative tools used by journalists when reporting on specific events.

authority is represented in the news), and the process structure of the narrative (i.e., how one acts towards suffering) of news stories and their associations with factual, testimonial, and participatory narratives. Together, these four narrative structures “perform” the news story, evoking emotion and creating meaning (Chouliaraki, 2013).

Chouliaraki discusses celebrities in terms of the gap that they create between themselves and the suffering they represent as well as how the news media present this suffering. The Tragically Hip’s *Man Machine Poem* Tour represents an interesting case to examine her claims given that Gord Downie was not creating a gap between himself (the celebrity) and the suffering; he was the suffering other. The remainder of the discussion focuses on how newspaper reports are structured when the celebrity is the sufferer by examining the different narrative structures of a sample of ten Canadian newspapers reports about The Tragically Hip’s farewell tour.

3. Data Analysis

The discussion in this section sets out the findings from the content and discourse analysis of the sampled articles.

3.1 Reporting on How Canadians are affected (i.e., Canadiana)

Across the ten articles, twenty-nine instances were identified in which mentions were made of Canada or activities and/or references to things that are distinctly Canadian (see Table 3.1). Although ‘Canadiana’ was mentioned in all ten articles, it was most prominent in four of them. In these instances, the Hip’s connection to Canada was the dominant theme. These articles were from in the *Times Colonist*, *Calgary Herald*, *Toronto Star*, *Ottawa Citizen*.

Victoria, BC- *Times Colonist*

The Hip’s farewell tour kicked-off in Victoria, British Columbia. Here, *the Times Colonist* published

an article with the headline “For Hip fans a sigh of relief”. The first line of the article reads, “Breathe easy, Canada. Ol’ Gord has still got it” (Devlin & Dedyna, 2016, para 1). This line sets the tone of the article, which is about how Canadians are affected by the news of Downie’s diagnosis and the announcement of the final tour.

Table 3.1 Instances of Canadiana

City	Newspaper	Canadiana
Victoria, BC	Times Colonist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>One of the best bands in Canadian history</i> 2. <i>Songs that couldn't sound more Canadian</i> 3. <i>fabric of the nation</i> 4. <i>their style and also their commitment to Canada</i> 5. <i>What could be more Canadian?</i> 6. <i>part of the fabric of this land</i> 7. <i>down-to-earth poet of Canadian content</i>
Calgary, AB	Calgary Herald	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Canadian icons Tragically Hip shine at...</i> 2. <i>no matter what brave face the nation may be putting on</i> 3. <i>one of the country's best live acts</i> 4. <i>Canada's greatest canon of songs</i> 5. <i>our country's coming of age</i>
Ottawa, ON	Ottawa Citizen	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>last chance to celebrate Canada's band</i> 2. <i>every Canadian knows</i> 3. <i>Canadiana-laced lyrics</i> 4. <i>Canada's band</i> 5. <i>Canadians of all walks of life</i>
Toronto, ON	Toronto Star	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>fans across Canada rallied</i> 2. <i>undeniably a national hero</i> 3. <i>the soundtrack of the Canadian summer</i> 4. <i>carrying Canadian flags</i>
London, ON	London Free Press	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>iconic Canadian rock band</i> 2. <i>a hold on the Canadian souls</i> 3. <i>Canada's greatest rock poets and heros</i>
Hamilton, ON	Hamilton Spectator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Canada's rock "n" roll poet</i> 2. <i>Personify Canadian rock 'n' roll</i> 3. <i>Canada's dirty little secret</i>
Vancouver, BC	Vancouver Sun	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>the connection the band has with the Canadian landscape</i> 2. <i>a bunch of blue-collar Canadians</i>
Edmonton, AB	Edmonton Journal	
Winnipeg, MB	Winnipeg Sun	
Kingston, ON	Kingston Whig-Standard	

The article mentions that Downie has cancer, but only to note that he did not address the issue

during the show. By not giving any details about the cancer diagnosis, the author effectively brushes aside the grim reality of Downie's prognosis, ostensibly positioning his suffering as less important than the fans' experience of the concert.

Devlin & Dedyna (2016) describe the Tragically Hip as "one of the best bands in Canadian history" (para 10), as the "fabric of the nation" (para 17) and "part of the fabric of this land" (para 18). They emphasize how the Hip is part of what makes Canada the country that it is and quote fans who identify Downie as a "down-to-earth poet of Canadian content" (Devlin & Dedyna, 2016, para 24). This emphasis on the Hip's ties to Canada is an example of process structure.¹⁰ That is, the onus on the band's ties to Canada combined with the claims about how the news of Downie's diagnosis is affecting the country, renders the article's primary focus on how Canadians are being affected by the news of the diagnosis rather than Downie's individual suffering.

This said, Downie's diagnosis is mentioned again in the concluding part of the article. However, here too it is presented in a manner that seeks to reassure readers that despite his cancer diagnosis, Downie remains a highly enthusiastic performer. Indeed, the mention of his diagnosis is seemingly used foremost to pacify any concern readers may have about his cancer affecting the Hip's performance. In so doing any meaningful discussion of the impact of the disease on Downie is avoided. This linking of Downie's suffering with his on-stage performance, which also is evident in the article's title "For Hip fans a sigh of relief" is another example of process structure.

The article is accompanied with an image of Downie singing, clad in a bright purple suit. Without prior knowledge of his diagnosis, the photo could be perceived as any other regular

¹⁰ Recall, the term 'process structure' refers to the method by which suffering is presented in article news report.

performance. However, with knowledge of his condition, the photo conveys that Downie is still able to perform, seemingly unhindered by his brain cancer.

Overall, the article focuses foremost on the fans' experience and perceptions of the concert with Downie's suffering positioned as a secondary consideration.

Calgary, Alberta- *Calgary Herald*

In Calgary, Alberta, the fourth stop on the tour, the *Calgary Herald* published an article titled "Canadian icons Tragically Hip shine at an emotional Saddledome show". This title sets the emphasis on the Hip's Canadian background by identifying them as national icons. The article goes on to say that the nation is putting on a brave face in the light of Downie's brain cancer and refers to the concert as "one last chance" for fans to experience the Hip live (Volmers, 2016, para 21). Here too, Downie's brain cancer is largely framed in terms of how it is affecting Canada as a country. Describing the Hip as "one of the country's best live acts," and labelling the band's repertoire as "Canada's greatest canon of songs" (Volmers, 2016, para 15), the author declares the band was a part of "our country's coming of age" (Volmers, 2016, para 18). This use of the possessive pronoun "our" in describing "our country", serves to include the reader as part of the "country" the author is describing (Chouliaraki, 2013).

Similar to the piece published in the *Times Colonist*, this article provides an example of process structure insofar as Downie's medical condition is presented as something with which the country must contend as opposed to being foremost something with which he is grappling.

The accompanying image for this article shows Downie in a shiny gold suit, clutching the microphone, mid-song. Similar to the image in the *Times Colonist*, this image portrays Downie as an enthusiastic performer, whose theatricality remains seemingly unaffected by his brain cancer.

Toronto, Ontario- *Toronto Star*

Toronto Ontario was the seventh stop on the tour. An article published in the *Toronto Star*, “Tragically Hip wraps first Toronto show of ‘Man Machine Poem’ tour”, also emphasized the *Canadian-ness* of Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip. By describing Downie as a “national hero”, Levinson King (2016) sets him up as an important part of Canada (para 8). The Hip themselves are described as the “soundtrack of the Canadian summer” with the author, explaining how the band were a part of many Canadians’ summer memories of bonfires and road trips (Levinson King, 2016, para 19). Supporting this theme, two fans who tell a story about picking up hitchhikers on the way to a Tragically Hip concert because they were carrying Canadian flags are cited in the article. The author uses these stories to convey how the Hip plays a part in many Canadians’ memories, and how they are tied to memories and activities that are distinctively Canadian.

In this article we see Downie’s diagnosis being invoked to illustrate how fans rallied behind and supported him when his glioblastoma was made public. Whereas Downie is described as being “full of life” (Levinson King, 2016, para 1) and the author refers to the Toronto concert as a celebration of Downie’s life, much attention is given to fans’ coping strategies, and their response to the news of his impending demise. For example, some fans are quoted as saying Downie and the Hip “[represent] a better part of my adult life”, and how they are “elated and emotional” after seeing the concert (Levinson King, 2016, para 13;15) This is another example of process structure insofar as this part of the narrative directs the readers’ attention to fan reactions rather than Downie as a suffering other. Indeed, it serves to reassure fans that Downie is still very much alive.

The use of quotes and personal stories from fans to give authority to the article in this manner also is indicative of what Chouliaraki refers to as clause structure.¹¹ The use of fans' personal stories and their experiences with the Hip frames these individuals as experts with a deep personal connection to a band they have followed them for years. By relying on fans as the only source of authority, we observe another instance of a newspaper report failing to zero-in on Downie himself as the sufferer.

The accompanying image shows Downie in a purple hat and shiny silver suit mid-performance, with two other band members close by. Here too we observe an image conveying an exuberant performance by an artist whose stage presence remains undiminished despite his battling a terminal illness.

Ottawa, Ontario- *Ottawa Citizen*

In Ottawa, Ontario, the ninth stop on the tour, the *Ottawa Citizen* published "Review: Tragically Hip give fans last chance to celebrate Canada's band". Here, the Hip are referred to as "Canada's band" right in the title. The focus of the article is not on Downie's suffering, but on how knowing about Downie's condition and the final tour is part of what makes a person 'Canadian'. The author describes Downie's prognosis and the effect it will have on the band's career as something "every Canadian knows" (n.a, 2016, para 2). He then states that the "Canadiana-laced lyrics" from "Canada's band", "[brought] together Canadians of all walks of life" (n.a, para 3). By describing the band in this manner, the author emphasizes the important position the band holds in Canadian life, seemingly placing this as more noteworthy than Downie's suffering. This too is an example of process structure.

¹¹ Recall, the term 'clause structure refers' to the method by which authority is represented in news reports.

This said, the author does adopt a more factual and detailed approach to reporting about the concert than his counterparts from the *Times Colonist* and the *Toronto Star*. This is evidenced by the use of the medical name for Downie's cancer (glioblastoma), and his noting that doctors said the disease currently was under control but will come back (n.a, 2016). In so doing, the author sets out the facts relating to Downie's condition rather than relying foremost on an emotional appeal. The presentation of this information at the beginning of the article brings Downie's suffering more into focus than it might have otherwise been. This is an example of both process and clause structure insofar as the oncologist mentioned at the start of the article is an authority on Downie's diagnosis and his testimonial adds authority to the author's statement. These examples of process and clause structure serve to place the article's focus on Downie's diagnosis, rather than his celebrity.

The accompanying image is a close-up photo of Downie in which he is making a face to the audience, and is wearing a shiny green suit . Without any prior knowledge of his diagnosis, this image could be interpreted being just another performance by Downie as opposed to the Hip's last ever performance in Ottawa.

The Canadiana Factor: Overall significance

Chouliaraki (2013) argues that celebrity involvement in humanitarian causes encourages feelings of individualism, which is to say that the spectator is more concerned about alleviating the discomfort they experience from learning of others' suffering than with alleviating the other's suffering. The articles published in *Times Colonist*, *Calgary Herald*, *Toronto Star* and *Ottawa Citizen* are illustrative of this tendency insofar as each is written in a manner that relies on elements of 'Canadiana' to convey what the Hip meant to Canada as a country, positioning

Downie's suffering as somehow less noteworthy than the impact the news of the diagnosis was having on Canadians. This said, the article in the *Ottawa Citizen* differed slightly from its counterparts insofar as it presented Downie's suffering at the beginning of the article, in a factual manner, thereby at least positioning his condition at the forefront of the text.

Chouliaraki (2013) argues that celebrity involvement in humanitarianism encourages a more narcissistic individual view of the suffering that places emphasis on the individual observer's feelings about the suffering rather than on the suffering itself. The articles published in the *Times Colonist*, *Calgary Herald* and *Toronto Star* appear to be illustrative of this tendency insofar as they each give prominence to the fans' reactions towards Downie's condition and their individual feelings about it than to Downie's suffering. This also is present in the *Ottawa Citizen* article but to a lesser degree. In this instance, the author did report on the fans' reactions to the suffering, but it was not the sole focus of the article.

3.2 Emotional Approach

Four of the ten articles were anchored foremost in an emotional approach to describing the tour stops and the news of Downie's cancer diagnosis. Here, the focus tended to centre on how fans were dealing with the diagnosis. In these four articles Downie's glioblastoma is not presented as something Downie is having to deal with, but rather as something that the fans have to deal with. Downie's prognosis is principally framed as the fans suffering. These articles were found in the *Vancouver Sun*, *Winnipeg Sun*, *London Free Press*, *Hamilton Spectator* (see Table 3.2).

Vancouver, BC- Vancouver Sun

The Vancouver Sun article "Review: Tragically Hip's penultimate Vancouver show no dress

Table 3.2 Instances of Evoking Emotion

City	Newspaper	Evoking Emotions
Edmonton, AB	Edmonton Journal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. utter magic, plenty of tears 2. seemingly impossible Last Dance 3. just bawling here, utter magic 4. my favourite ever 5. never going to see that live again 6. a specific, painful caveat 7. this is so hard 8. shaking, tear-blinded, dry-mouthed, unnerved, furious and of course thankful 9. Cue waterworks 10. Love you all so ferociously 11. Thank you for all your magic
Vancouver, BC	Vancouver Sun	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. locked in brotherly hugs 2. Fathers, mothers, daughters and sons embraced each other and held hands as they soaked in... 3. Evans was emotional looking ahead to Tuesday's show 4. surrounded by adoring fans 5. given love and support by the fans 6. a gripping moment 7. making every second count 8. his emotions showing clearly
Calgary, AB	Calgary Herald	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. will likely be the last 2. felt a pang of grief for a future lost 3. an almost religious impact 4. grief-heavy 5. sigh of relief 6. devastating moments 7. feel of both celebration and [...] a little grief 8. stunning, heart-stopping
Victoria, BC	Times Colonist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a sigh of relief 2. the deepest darkest fear 3. saying goodbye 4. one last souvenir 5. magically hip, happy and only a bit bittersweet 6. heartbroken 7. overwhelming emotion and love
Hamilton, ON	Hamilton Spectator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a remarkable and emotional evening 2. Truth is we probably will never see Gord Downie as a live performer in Hamilton again 3. it's more than likely over 4. say goodbye 5. bravery shown by Downie 6. tears sobbed during this tour 7. as if his time was ticking out
Toronto, ON	Toronto Star	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. full of life 2. time seemed to stop 3. bittersweet bow 4. the concert turned heavy 5. they did not mourn him 6. elated and emotional 7. an end of an era
Ottawa, ON	Ottawa Citizen	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. cut short by the scourge of cancer 2. unthinkable news 3. emotionally charged farewell 4. a powerful performance 5. a time to celebrate
London, ON	London Free Press	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. emotional, uplifting and overwhelming 2. a huge shout of love 3. charged with meaning 4. devastating news
Winnipeg, MB	Winnipeg Sun	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. intense and emotional 2. how magical the experience was 3. a powerful, poignant farewell
Kingston, ON	Kingston Whig-Standard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The hip existed because of them, and between them 2. a common thread, of joys and pride and passion

rehearsal” was written about the second stop on the tour. It begins by setting out the atmosphere outside the concert venue, with the author describing fans “locked in brotherly hugs” and noting that, “Fathers, mothers, daughters and sons embraced each other and held hands as they soaked in the pre-show buzz” (Marchand, 2016, para 1-2). This sets the tone of an emotional reunion for fans; a sense of community that brings people together. This early appeal to the reader’s emotion is part of what Chouliaraki labels the cohesive structure.¹² There are no facts presented, only an emotional description to start the article, which allows the reader to become emotionally invested in the text.

To emphasize the sense of community and the impact the final tour is having on fans, the author relies heavily on quotes and stories from those attending the concert. These stories include accounts of fans who: had been to 26 Hip concerts, wore hockey jerseys signed by the band members, and had road tripped across the country to visit locations referenced in Hip song lyrics. These stories exemplify clause structure insofar as presenting long-time Hip fans brought together by the concert contributes a sense of authority to the notion that there is a community of Hip fans, and that this community is dealing together with Downie’s diagnosis. The language used by the author further supports the emotional tone of the article with the Vancouver concert described as “riveting”, “a gripping moment” and the “vibe” described as “electrifying” (Marchand, 2016, para 13).

An example of process structure is manifest in the article when Downie is described as being in “solid form” (para 16) and having “life-affirming energy” (para 29). These terms/phrases contrast with what one might expect from someone suffering from cancer. Any suffering Downie

¹² Recall, ‘cohesive structure’ refers to the order with which information is presented in a news report.

might be experiencing is seemingly pushed aside, with readers provided with reassurances that he is not suffering, but is in “solid form” (Marchand, 2016, para 16). Another example of process structure in this particular article is the author’s use of the phrase “final master stroke” to describe the concert (Marchand, 2016, para 29). In so doing, he presents the concert as a final chance to engage with Downie.

Chouliaraki (2013) argues that by presenting the suffering other with a sense of finality the spectator is less likely to engage with the suffering other. In this case Downie’s diagnosis was terminal and the likelihood of fans continuing to engage with him after the concert was limited mainly to attending other concerts on the tour. In other words, attending a concert and saying goodbye marked the full extent to which most audience members could engage with him.

The article is accompanied by an image of Downie in a shiny blue suit, with the band members in the background. He seems to be dancing. Without prior knowledge of Downie’s diagnosis, this picture could be from any other Hip show prior to his diagnosis

The above examples of cohesive structure, clause structure and process structure illustrate that the focus of the article is not about Downie’s suffering, but rather how fans are dealing with the news of his diagnosis. His suffering and the issue of brain cancer fall to the wayside, and fans are reassured that he is in “solid form” (Marchand, 2016, para 16).

Winnipeg, Manitoba- Winnipeg Sun

Stop number five on the Man Machine Poem Tour was Winnipeg. The article published in the *Winnipeg Sun* about the concert, “Tragically Hip deliver powerful, poignant farewell to Winnipeg fans” also is characterized by its emotional tone. The article begins by referring to the news of Downie’s brain cancer as “brutal,” describing him as a “beloved front man,” and characterizing

previous concerts on the tour as “intense and emotional” (Sterdan, 2016, para 2-3). These descriptors serve to cast Downie in a positive light and to emphasize the emotionality of the event.

The author then switches to a descriptive factual approach, describing Downie’s outfit, some of the songs performed, the sing-alongs that took place, and the band’s positioning on the stage. As with articles from the *Calgary Herald*, the *London Free Press*, and the *Ottawa Citizen*, the author describes other band members clustering around Downie almost as though to protect him (Sterdan, 2016). It is important to note that while this clustering does seem to demonstrate how the band members are protecting Downie, it also is reflective of the earlier days in the band’s history when they regularly played in much smaller venues.

Beginning with an emotional description and then switching to a factual account of the concert is an example of cohesive structure. It allows the author to create meaning by setting an emotional tone for readers and encouraging emotional investment in the text that follows.

The accompanying image shows a close up of Downie, in a shiny green suit. He is clutching the microphone in one hand and seems to be waving to the audience with the other hand. This image supports the tone of the article, which is that the concert was a chance for fans to say goodbye to Downie, and for Downie to say goodbye to his fans (as evidenced in the article title).

London, Ontario- *London Free Press*

London Ontario was the sixth stop on the *Man Machine Poem* Tour. The article published in the *London Free Press*, “Singer Gord Downie and his Hip bandmates left it all on stage Monday in their fond farewell to London fans” discusses how the Hip’s concert in London. It begins with the author telling readers that the concert was “As anticipated – emotional, uplifting, and

overwhelming – and a night for all ages” (Stewart Reany, 2016, para 1). Starting the article in this manner sets up an emotional description of the concert, with attention given foremost to the sentiments evoked by this performance and the band more broadly. The author writes that the Hip were greeted with a “huge shout of love” and that the band is loved by its fans, and that this love helps to offset the “devastating news Downie is battling terminal brain cancer” (Stewart Reany, 2016, para 2-3).

Three examples of process structure were identified in this article. First, the manner in which Downie’s suffering is presented in contrast to how much he is cherished. Here the author uses the word “devastating” to describe how the news of Downie’s diagnosis was received by many. Emotional meaning also is created in the article through the author’s observation that “every gesture [made by Downie] seemed to be charged with meaning” (Stewart Reany, 2016, para 4). The result is an onus being placed on what it means to lose a cherished celebrity as opposed to Downie’s suffering and how it is affecting him.

Second, Downie’s diagnosis is mentioned right at the beginning of the article, which places it at the forefront and gives it more focus. Third, toward the end of the article the author describes how Downie’s bandmates seemingly protected him on the stage by standing close to him; much closer than they had at other shows before his diagnosis. Here, the author seems to be relating the band’s position on the stage to the strong bonds between band members. This elusion illustrates Downie’s suffering by comparing the band’s protective positioning on the stage to friends who support each other during times of suffering.

The article is accompanied by an image of Gord Downie is a shiny purple jacket and a white top hat with feathers. He seems to be gesturing towards the audience. As with the images

accompanying the other articles discussed thus far, this image could be representative of any Hip performance. It is only the knowledge of Downie's diagnosis that gives meaning to the photo – i.e., Downie is gesturing to the crowd in London for possibly the last time.

Hamilton, Ontario- *Hamilton Spectator*

By the time the band played Hamilton Ontario they had eight shows behind them and only two more to go. The article published in the *Hamilton Spectator*, "Gord Downie: I've got to go, it's been a pleasure doing business with you," also is firmly rooted in the emotional aspects of the show but adopts a different approach than those from the *Vancouver Sun* and *London Free Press*. Here, we observe the author emphasizing finality with his statement, "Truth is we probably will never see Gord Downie as a live performer in Hamilton again" (Rockingham, 2016, para 6). The author then goes on to recount Downie's oncologist informing a news conference earlier in the year that he was going to die from his brain cancer. Given that his oncologist is an authority on brain cancer, the recalling of his statement demonstrates clause structure. Its use is noteworthy because it emphasizes the finality of the concert, and the extent to which Downie is suffering. Whereas other articles in the sample (e.g., the *Toronto Star* and the *Kingston Whig-Standard*) discuss Downie's suffering in the abstract, here we observe a directness that is largely absent from the sample. Emphasis is given to the terrible reality of Downie's prognosis, thereby placing his suffering ahead of the fans' experience of the concert.

However, the effect of the diagnosis on fans is not completely absent and is observed in the author's statement that there have been more "tears sobbed during this tour than probably another in Canadian rock history" (Rockingham, 2016, para 11). This is not something the author knows as a fact, but rather something about which he speculates, and which introduces

additional emotion into the article. The concert also is described as being a “remarkable and emotional evening” (Rockingham, 2016, para 5).

Process structure also is evident in this particular article through the manner in which the author contrasts Downie’s suffering with his choice to carry on and do the farewell tour. In writing that his bravery in choosing to go on tour was what made it “the hottest ticket in the country” (Rockingham, 2016, para 10), the author presents Downie’s suffering as an obstacle he chose to face head-on, which made the farewell shows that much more special (para 10).

The use of clause structure to illustrate the finality of the concert helps to emphasize the gravity of Downie’s diagnosis. By emphasizing the severity and the sense of finality, Downie’s suffering becomes the focus of the article.

The article is accompanied by three images, all of which are close ups of Downie, mid-performance, clad in a silver jacket and white top-hat. These pictures could have been from any previous Hip performance, it is only the prior knowledge of Downie’s diagnosis that conveys a sense that this might be the last time he performs in Hamilton.

Emotional Approach: Overall Significance

Chouliaraki (2013) argues that emotional appeals are used to make spectators give some thought to the suffering of others. In the case of the articles reviewed above, emotional appeals were seemingly used to emphasize how the news of Downie’s diagnosis was affecting fans as opposed to Downie himself. This is noteworthy because the emotional appeals were not used to allow the spectators to think about Downie and how he might be affected by the suffering, as Chouliaraki argues emotional appeals have the ability to do.

3.3 Outliers

Two of the ten articles in the sample were classified as outliers. The *Edmonton Journal* article is marked by the extent to which the author inserts himself into the text, using it as an outlet to convey his personal feelings about Downie's diagnosis. The article from the *Kingston Whig-Standard* does not focus on the Hip's final concert or Downie's diagnosis, instead describing the Hip's connection to Kingston. The unique elements of these two articles are discussed below.

Edmonton, Alberta- *Edmonton Journal*

Edmonton, Alberta was the third stop on the *Man Machine Poem* Tour. The *Edmonton Journal* journalist who reported on the concert opted to use a writing style that involved inserting himself directly into the article. This is evident through the use of the inclusive pronoun "we" in the article title "We arrive alive': Utter magic, plenty of tears as Tragically Hip play Rexall Place on final tour", and the first lines of the article itself. In so doing, the article focuses on the journalist's personal experience of the concert and his attachment to the Hip.

The article starts with a factual description of the concert, including the band's attire and the songs played. By the fourth paragraph, the author begins to employ the first person, and becomes increasingly familiar: "ain't gonna lie, just bawling here, utter magic" (Griwkowsky, 2016, para 4). There are a few things to note with this statement. The author's use of the contractions "ain't" and "gonna" make the writing less professional, and somehow more human. In so doing, the author's personal feelings are conveyed to the reader and the text becomes a personal account of the concert as opposed to a more traditional concert review. This is an example of clause structure insofar as the author does not use quotes from fans or medical professionals as sources of authority, but instead relies on his own experiences. The author

becomes the source of authority. Rather than detail fan reactions to the concert and Downie's diagnosis, the author is recounting his personal affinity for and experience with the band. He is clearly invested in the story.

Concluding the article with the phrase "Um... I uh... Jesus... goodbye, Gord. Love you all so ferociously. Thank you for all your magic. There are other worlds than these." (para 12) reinforces this effect. The reader sees the author stutter and hesitate in a way that any upset person might. By revealing himself to be a fan like any other who is torn up about the news of Downie's prognosis, the author seemingly offers – presumably to some readers at least – a more legitimate account of the concert and how the fans are affected by the moment.

Process structure is used here in the way that Downie's suffering is presented in terms of how the journalist is handling the news of the diagnosis. Put simply, the suffering outlined in the article belongs to the journalist, not to Downie.

The article is accompanied by a close-up image of Downie, mid-song, wearing a shiny silver suit and a white top-hat with feathers attached. His eyes are closed, and he seems to be immersed in song. Without prior knowledge of his diagnosis, this could have been Downie performing at any show. In knowing about his prognosis, this image conveys the sense that this is quite possibly Downie's last performance in Edmonton. The second image shows Downie gesturing to the crowd. Again, without prior knowledge, this could have been Downie gesturing to the crowd at any of his previous shows.

Kingston, Ontario- *Kingston Whig-Standard*

The final show of the tour took place on August 20, 2016 in Kingston Ontario. Given that Kingston is the band's hometown, it is not too surprising to find that the reporting in the *Kingston Whig-*

Standard differs from the other articles in the sample. For instance, the author of “The Tragically Hip exist all around Kingston” focuses on the Hip’s connection to Kingston and a particular mural that can be found in a downtown Kingston alley as opposed to how the final concert progressed, the atmosphere, and Downie’s diagnosis.

This particular mural was created by Davis Manning, a former Hip band member (Gibson, 2016). The mural reads: “The Hip live between us” (Gibson, 2016, para 6). Manning explains that the mural represents the fact that for fans, “the Hip existed because of them, and between them” (Gibson, 2016, para 16). The Hip “brought the fans together [and] kept them together” (Gibson, 2016, para 6). This mural, in a downtown Kingston alley, represents the Hip, and the Hip’s connection to their hometown.

By writing about this mural and the meaning behind it, the author focuses attention on how the Hip exist in Kingston and their connections to it. There is no mention of Downie’s cancer diagnosis, and there is no focus on the fan’s feelings about the final tour. There is an underlying understanding that the reader knows about Downie’s condition and why this concert so special, and an equal understanding that these tragic facts can remain unstated. This is an example of process structure – the suffering is not explicitly mentioned, but in assuming that the reader is aware of the diagnosis and the concert the author implies knowledge of the diagnosis. By presenting the suffering in this way, Downie as a member of the Hip becomes the focus of the article as opposed to Downie as someone suffering from terminal brain cancer.

This article is accompanied by an image of thousands of Hip fans gathering to watch the final concert. This is the only article that shows the fans, rather than Downie performing. This is noteworthy because this article focuses on the Hip’s ties to Kingston, and the impact they had on

the people who lived there. Instead of showing a close-up of Downie, the image shows all the fans who showed up to celebrate Downie, the man with such close connections with their town.

Outliers: Overall significance

Chouliaraki (2013) argues that when a celebrity is present in a humanitarian cause, it encourages a narcissistic view of the suffering. This is evident in the *Edmonton Sun* article. In the article from the *Kingston Whig-Standard* it was the Hip's connection to Kingston rather than Downie's suffering that is emphasized. Downie's celebrity status and the band's ties to Kingston take precedence, not Downie as a sufferer.

4. Discussion

The discussion in this section uses Chouliaraki's concepts of Appeals, Celebrities, Rock Concerts/Charisma, as well as the notion of para-social interaction to examine the implications of the findings emerging from the analysis of the newspaper accounts of the stops on the Man Machine Poem tour.

4.1 Appeals

Chouliaraki argues that emotional appeals are used to catalyze audience reactions to suffering. What she calls 'positive appeals' focus on the sufferer's agency and dignity as well as the agency of the spectator. This is done by personalizing the suffering other and imbuing her/him with a sense of humanity. In so doing a balance is struck between the sufferer and the spectator – i.e.; the spectator sees a shared sense of humanity between her/himself and the suffering other. Chouliaraki (2013) states that, by seeing the shared sense of humanity the spectator will feel more inclined to give aid to the sufferer.

The use of positive language and imagery was evident in each of the ten articles in the sample. For example, the *Times Colonist* described Downie as “drinking dynamite and spitting kerosene from the jump” (para 3), while the *Hamilton Spectator* described his choice to perform as one of “bravery” (para 10). Nine out of ten articles were accompanied by images of Downie, with almost all of them (N=7) showing Downie by himself, unaccompanied by other band members. Only one article showed a picture of the fans. The images of Downie show him as an energetic performer, a man with agency and dignity, not at all hindered by his disease. The images do not portray a suffering man, and without any prior knowledge of his diagnosis, the reader would not necessarily get any sense of suffering from the images. Chouliaraki argues that these kinds of positive words and imagery give the suffering other agency, which allows the spectator to identify with them which, in turn, encourages the spectator to act on the suffering.

In terms of the reporting around Downie’s performances on the *Man Machine Poem* tour, we observe something different with respect to the spectator’s opportunities to act on the suffering. Chouliaraki, for example, writes of the image of a starving child giving the child a sense of agency that creates a sense of hope that encourages the spectator to act. In the case of Gord Downie, the agency with which he was imbued in the sample articles was seemingly aimed at fostering a sense of relief among readers. In these articles his agency did not encourage the reader to directly act against cancer but instead was seemingly used as a trope to reassure readers that Downie was still very much alive and capable of performing as well as at any other time prior to being diagnosed with brain cancer. In other words, the main act that readers appeared to be encouraged to undertake was to try to attend one of the farewell concerts.

Chouliaraki argues that these types of positive appeals¹³ contribute to fostering post-humanitarian publics. By encouraging the spectator to see themselves in the suffering other, and giving the suffering other agency and dignity, the focus shifts away from an “us and them” mentality towards one that is more focused on what she calls “self-indulgent narcissism”, which is to say a focus on the spectator’s individual feelings about the suffering (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 73). This self-indulgent response to suffering leads to what she calls a “decoupling of emotion for the sufferer from acting on the cause of the suffering” (2013, p. 73). In other words, the emotions the spectator feels for the suffering other are separate from any desire to act on the suffering, and therefore evokes emotion in the spectator that does not necessarily lead to any action to alleviate the suffering. This decoupling of emotion can be seen in the articles from *London Free Press*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Edmonton Journal*, and the *Hamilton Spectator* where the audiences’ feelings about Downie’s suffering are given prominence above anything Downie may have been going through. Moreover, and in addition to suffering not being the focus of these articles, no mention was made of opportunities for readers to engage with the suffering and provide aid. In Gord Downie’s case, there was no tangible action spectators could take to alleviate his suffering per se given his prognosis. However, taking action to support brain cancer research was and remains a real opportunity.

4.2 Celebrity

Chouliaraki argues that celebrities create post-humanitarian publics in two ways: firstly, they can shift the focus from public action onto personal diplomacy, and second they can shift the focus

¹³ Chouliaraki defines positive appeals as the representation of suffering in a realistic way. The sufferer is not presented as a victim their agency and dignity are emphasized.

from the suffering onto the celebrity her/himself. Sceptics see celebrity as a “quick fix”, something that captures the spectator’s attention quickly but does not hold it. They also argue that celebrities may “stifle the plurality of alternative voices” with their one voice becoming the only voice that is heard (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 83). Although Downie was a celebrity humanitarian in the sense that he was championing a cause and trying to raise money for brain cancer research, his humanitarian efforts were not mentioned in any of the articles. Instead, his celebrity status functioned as a quick fix insofar as it contributed to bringing brain cancer to the audiences’ attention for a quick moment in nine of ten of the sampled articles. This is also evident in the levelling of contributions to the Gord Downie Fund for brain cancer research after the impact of his diagnosis had worn off. The fund raised \$1m with weeks of its launch but fourteen months later had grown only to \$1.8m.¹⁴ This speaks to Chouliaraki’s (2013) argument that celebrity status works to bring attention to an issue, but this attention is short-lived and the spectators often stop thinking about the issue after the novelty has worn off.

4.3 Concerts/rock star charisma

Chouliaraki (2013) claims that rock stars have charisma which portrays them as ‘heroes’, and this combined with the spectacle, the ritual, and the coming together of people around a shared experience (i.e., concert), encourages those people to act. In the case of Gord Downie, we observe something slightly different. In his case, fans and concert attendees could not act on his suffering in the way Chouliaraki’s writings suggest precisely because he was suffering from a terminal illness. The only viable option for those seeking to act against the cause of his, and many

¹⁴ As of October 17, 2017 \$1.8 million had been raised. See, <https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=about-gord-downie-fund-brain-cancer>

others', suffering (i.e., Glioblastoma) was to contribute to supporting brain cancer research. Another factor to consider is that unlike concerts like Live Aid and Live 8, the *Man Machine Poem* Tour did not have the explicit goal of raising money for research or any other causes. Concerts like Live Aid and Live 8 have the ability to bring people together around a shared cause (Chouliaraki, 2013), but the *Man Machine Poem* Tour brought people together to celebrate Gord Downie and the Hip, not to raise money for brain cancer research per se. Although donations were made, The *Man Machine Poem* Tour was not designed with the sole purpose of raising awareness of brain cancer or gathering donations for the Gord Downie Fund for Brain Cancer Research. Therefore Chouliaraki's (2013) claim that rock stars are "'heroes of a new sort' [who can] enchant publics and set a new paradigm for action" (p. 107) does not apply here in the same way that it does to Live Aid and Live 8.

4.4 Para-social interaction

Tied to the notion of rock stars and their ability to enchant their audiences is the concept of para-social interaction, which aims to explain how audiences interact with the performer, (specifically the celebrity performer), and the relationship that forms between the person on a stage and the spectator in the audience.

The invitation by the performer for the audience to glimpse her/his personal life was evident in a number of articles. In the *Hamilton Spectator* the author described Downie as "winking a knowing, appreciative eye" (para 1). In the *Toronto Star* the author referenced a moment during the show when Downie locked eyes with his fans, while the *Vancouver Sun* quoted Downie as joking "it smells like dope in here" (para 18). These examples show Downie as a human, allowing an intimate connection to be established between him and the spectators in

attendance. Horton & Wohl (2009) explain that showing the audience that he is only human, showing the audience his weaknesses (the stuttering, the tearing up) makes the spectator feel as though they are seeing parts of his life that are not necessarily part of his onstage persona; they are getting a glimpse of the 'real' Gord Downie.

Chouliaraki (2013) argues that a celebrity's ability to show their real self helps to establish a connection with the spectator and encourages the spectator to act. Here, Chouliaraki's lack of distinction between engaging with the 'suffering of others' and engaging with the 'suffering other' comes into play. To 'act', which is to say to engage with Downie's suffering was to attend a concert and say goodbye. Likewise, donating to brain cancer research also constitutes a means of engaging with his suffering. Since his illness was terminal, there was little else one could do. By contrast, engaging with Downie as a suffering other would involve personal interaction with him in a way that would alleviate, albeit only for a short time, his level of suffering. This is an option that simply was not possible for the vast majority of fans outside of his immediate circle of family and friends. Although the articles mention various examples of Downie showing his 'real' side, and creating an intimate connection with the audience, it was not in the context of encouraging the spectator to act on his suffering or the cause of his suffering.

The articles in the sample did mention these intimate moments but they were stated in reference to the fact that the spectators were losing an icon. These intimate moments played into how difficult it was for the audience to lose Downie, rather than encourage the audience to engage with Downie's suffering or as a suffering other.

5. Conclusion

This major research paper set out to address the following research question: *What are the*

implications for Chouliaraki's theorization of suffering in post-humanitarianism when the celebrity is also the suffering other? The response is set out below.

In order to answer the research question, it was important to determine where the focus of the newspaper articles in the sample lay – whether on Downie as a suffering other, or Downie as a celebrity. Almost half of the articles (N=4) relied on fans as the sense of authority rather than Downie's oncologist (N=1) or Downie himself, and most of the articles emphasized how the fans were dealing with the news of the diagnosis (N= 8). Put simply, the focus of the articles was on how the fans were being impacted by Downie's impending death and the possibility of his condition affecting his performance, not Downie or others who find themselves battling glioblastoma. Likewise, detailed information about Downie's diagnosis was rarely placed at the beginning of the articles in the sample (N=1). Instead, the majority of the sampled articles (N=9) started with an appeal to the reader's emotion, allowing the reader to become emotionally invested in the article. These findings make clear that it is Downie as a celebrity not Downie as a suffering other that is the focus of the articles.

This is noteworthy because the underpinning assumption of post-humanitarianism is that spectators are separated from the suffering by ICTs, and the spectator is sheltered from the suffering other (Chouliaraki, 2006, 2008). This promotes a narcissistic approach to suffering, which is to say the spectator is more concerned with his/her own individual feelings about the suffering than they are with the suffering itself. Although the spectators were not separated from the concert by ICTs (as most of the spectators attended one of the concerts in person), they were separated from Downie in the sense that they did not know him personally, they did not communicate with him on a personal level. Therefore, they were not able to engage with

Downie's suffering in the way the Chouliaraki discusses.

Chouliaraki (2013), says that celebrities and rock stars have the ability to engage with the spectator, and encourage them to act. However, Downie's case was unique in that his illness was terminal, therefore there was little action that could be done to better his situation. Therefore, the spectator's only opportunity for engagement was to go to the concert, and say goodbye to Downie. This situation supported the narcissistic underpinning of post-humanitarianism; there was more attention given to how the spectator was feeling about saying goodbye to Downie, and how the spectator him/herself was handling the news of Downie's diagnosis.

The phenomenon of para-social interaction says that performers are able to establish an intimate connection with their audience, which invites the spectator to engage with the performer (Horton & Wohl, 2009). Downie did establish a sense of intimacy with his audience when he stuttered, apologized, and showed that he was struggling (even if for a brief moment). Horton & Wohl (2009) say that this intimate connection between the audience and the performer allows the audience to engage with the performer. This was demonstrated in the findings. The articles focused on the fans' feelings about Downie, their personal memories involving Downie, their experiences tied to him, all of which were reinforced by the intimate connection Downie established with his audience.

The gap between spectator and suffering other that contributes to a post-humanitarian sensibility was evident in the findings. This gap was emphasized by Downie's celebrity status, and the fact that there were limited options for the spectator to engage with him. This lack of engagement led to a narcissistic view of the suffering, where the articles were more focused on the fans' reactions to Downie's suffering than on Downie as a suffering other.

5.1 Limitations and Future Directions

By using a sample of articles that was only comprised of articles written within two days of the concerts taking place, it is possible that the articles were much more focused on describing the concert and providing fan reactions than they were on discussing Downie's diagnosis and how it was affecting him. This leaves room for future research comprised of an expanded sample of articles including opinion pieces, magazine articles, and entries from fan forums. The small sample, which included concert review articles was not necessarily representative of the entire discussion surrounding Downie's diagnosis, and it is possible that an expanded sample of articles from a larger time period (not just from the days following each concert) would provide more insight into how news reporting is structured when the celebrity is also the suffering other.

5.2 Final Conclusions

After a thorough analysis of the 10 sampled articles, it became clear that when a celebrity is also a suffering other, news reporting is structured in a way that focuses on the celebrity status, not on them as a suffering other. The articles focused on Downie as a celebrity and the fans reactions to losing him as a celebrity, and his actual suffering and the affect his suffering was presented as less noteworthy. Downie's celebrity status encouraged a narcissistic view of his suffering, and the articles focused on how his suffering was affecting the fans, not on the suffering itself. News reporting is structured in a way that diminishes the importance of the suffering other, and instead focuses on the suffering other as a celebrity.

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