

Reviews

The reviews pages are edited by Tor Clark. If you have a book you would like to review or have come across a new book we should know about please get in touch. Also if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed, please contact Tor on tclark@dmu.ac.uk

Journalists always tell the best stories

Introduction to the Reviews section by Reviews editor Tor Clark, De Montfort University, Leicester

With such an appropriate special edition theme as ‘storytelling’ the Reviews section rises to the challenge and offers readers a selection of excellent stories, well told by accomplished writers.

The storytelling edition begins by offering readers words of wisdom by Hemmingway - Emma Hemmingway of Nottingham Trent University, who spent the summer with another great storyteller, Jeremy Vine of Newsnight and Radio 2 fame. Dr Hemmingway enjoyed Vine’s gossipy memoirs, but finds a worrying faux pas concealed within its pages.

Another story, that of football’s journey from a Saturday afternoon working class pastime to an all-embracing globally-conquering media phenomenon, described by writer and lecturer Roger Domeneghetti, enthralls one of our journal’s editors, Mick Temple of Staffordshire University.

Professor Temple, a devotee of the beautiful game, has come to this text late but thoroughly recommends it for teaching or just enjoyment.

Prolific book editor and regular JE reviewer John Mair, takes a break from assembling his next collection of articles, which ask whether print journalism is finally facing its end, to review former BBC Director General Mark Thompson’s provocative new book *Enough Said: What’s Gone Wrong With the Language of Politics?* He finds plenty to interest and intrigue as the CEO of the New York Times uses examples from his experience on both sides of the Atlantic to ask searching questions about journalism’s role in the health of our democracy.

And finally, as this edition’s *Classic from the Journalism Bookshelf*, who better to feature but that late lamented prince of political columnists, Alan Watkins, who served the Spectator, New Statesman, Observer and Independent on Sunday, in his time with informed aplomb. Watkins had a style all his own, and while his memoirs *A Short Walk Down Fleet Street*, are indeed short on his personal craft, they more than make up for it with delicious descriptions and anecdotes from half a century of political column writing.

So overall, an interesting mix, with stimulating and enjoyable storytelling at its heart.

If you would like to review a book about journalism for Journalism Education, or you have a suggestion for a recent book or a classic to be reviewed, please contact Reviews editor Tor Clark of De Montfort University via TClark@dmu.ac.uk

A classic from the Journalism bookshelf

A Short Walk Down Fleet Street by Alan Watkins

Review by Tor Clark, De Montfort University, Leicester

With this edition of *Journalism Education* focusing on storytelling, who better to feature as our Classic from the Journalism Bookshelf than the prince of political columnists, Alan Watkins?

Readers of the Independent on Sunday, and before that The Observer, will have enjoyed his weekly musings on matters political. Watkins had a style all his own, unusual in such a crowded field, but more importantly he had the contacts and the context – the sure grasp of political history – to ensure his style was matched with both his authority and wry humour.

Watkins, a son of the south Wales valleys, had a long career in national journalism, starting with the Sunday Express under John Junor's editorship and Lord Beaverbrook's ownership in the 1950s, before moving on to the Spectator, the New Statesman and latterly the two Sundays.

His weekly column was a treat, combining insightful current analysis alongside historical context, often underlined by the fact he had lived through that context and reported on it at the time.

Watkins wrote a handful of very readable books including works of political history *The Road to Number Ten* (1998) and *A Conservative Coup* (1991), and works of memoir and portraits such as *Brief Lives – With Some Memoirs* (1982, 2004) and this volume, the most substantial of his books covering journalism and journalists, which earns its place on the *Journalism Education* Journalism Classics Bookshelf because of the quality of its insight and its writing.

One might approach this book hoping for an account of Watkins' life in national political journalism from his arrival on Fleet Street in the 1950s to its publication in 2000, but Watkins – never a writer to deliver the predictable – instead provides an account of the publications for which he worked, particularly the characters he encountered, both political and journalistic, but mostly journalistic, especially fine writers and Welsh rugby correspondents.

The magic of this book is not what is written but how it is written. Watkins' sheer style can be enjoyed as much as his insight. His style might seem over-indulgent in other writers. Watkins displays his journalistic rather than literary background in his use of short, pithy sentences. He employs his descriptive ability so as to not only be excused but also celebrated. He describes Beaverbrook's butler thus:

“Eventually a summons to lunch arrived. It was communicated by Raymond, the butler, a red-haired man of uncertain age with protruding eyes, a surprising strong handshake and a camp conversational style” (page 53).

Another passage celebrating some of the many fine journalists of the 1950s and 60s with whom he regularly drank – and there is an awful lot of drinking in this memoir – describes New Statesman reviewer John Raymond:

“Raymond had a face like Stilton cheese. He was prone to sweating and never looked entirely well. He pushed the mode of dress then prevailing in higher journalism to extremes, sometimes appearing in a coat, a waistcoat and a pair of trousers from three different suits. He usually wore a sports coat and a pullover. He always had about him a whole collection of newspapers, periodicals and books from the London Library or from papers which wanted him to review them. Others such as Philip Hope-Wallace encumbered themselves similarly. Journalists who could perfectly well afford a briefcase or a bag of some description preferred to inconvenience themselves with quantities of books and newsprint precariously held. To a certain extent they still do. It is one of the peculiarities of the trade” (p95-6).

Watkins describes a lost golden age of Fleet Street, where fine writers were free to spend much of their working days in pubs, clubs, wine bars and restaurants. He mourns the trade's move from Fleet Street and the imprisonment of modern writers within their Docklands offices.

So what we have is essentially a selection of memoirs and anecdotes, focused on the people and places he knew, rather than on himself. This is perhaps its only disappointment, because as a long-standing admirer and practitioner of political writing I wanted to know more about how the master achieved his results – his techniques and processes – skills and insights about his craft I could attempt to replicate myself or pass on

to my students. It's still hugely enjoyable for its witty observations of the world he knew and chiefly for the way he describes it, but just a brief glimpse into the art of a master practitioner would have been the icing on the cake.

The book stops abruptly in 2000, with Watkins still happily employed on the *Independent on Sunday*, and lacks a satisfactory conclusion, but what has gone before makes up for it.

Voting in the most exciting general election of modern times took place on Thursday May 6, 2010. Two days later, with no clear winner, frantic negotiations taking place between the political parties, and speculation and gossip rife within political and journalistic circles, Watkins, aged 77, died. I always like to think though we miss his unique style and insight, the time of his passing was about as apt as it could have been. We will not see his like again, but thankfully he has left us his writing. What we now need is a collection of his best columns from down the years.

A Short Walk Down Fleet Street by Alan Watkins published by Duckworth, 2000, 277 pages, ISBN 0 7156 2910 7, published at £18.

From the Back Page to the Front Room: Football's journey Through the English Media Roger Domeneghetti

Review by Professor Mick Temple, Staffordshire University, UK

I must begin by apologising for not reviewing this book earlier. I understand a second edition is on the way for early 2017, so I hope the author forgives me for focussing on this earlier hardback edition.

The truth is I didn't know of its existence until a few months ago, despite teaching a Master's module in Sports Broadcast Studies. I would now consider it essential reading for anyone teaching or studying on sports journalism courses. In its breadth, depth of research and vigour, it is streets ahead of any competition.

From the Back Page to the Front Room is well-researched, full of unexpected nuggets, witty, insightful and, despite the mass of historical detail, a pleasure to read. Its critique of English football and its representation by the media is critical but not cynical, and is infused throughout by a clear love of both football and its journalists. It's also a mine of unexpected information. For example, we know that football violence has deep historical roots, but Domeneghetti cites a 1934 *Leicester Mercury* report on damage caused to a football special train by a 'hooligan element', a good few decades before most of us would have guessed at such occurrences.

The book covers all aspects of football coverage, with an appreciative critique of fanzines and alternative journalism along the way. It even includes a chapter on the greatest English footballer of all time. His rocket shot and last-minute winners were the very essence of football fiction, and the legendary Roy Race's career is analysed in a very funny (yet insightful) chapter which analyses the English media's representations of the English footballer and their treatment of 'funny foreigners' who deviated from English notions of fair play. Sadly, despite the influx of aliens into our own football leagues such stereotypes persist, as some football commentators continue to demonstrate.

I hope the new edition expands his interesting examination of the ways in which football, even at the stadium, is becoming an immersive experience in which in-game tweeting has become essential for many spectators, and continues his analysis of the impact new and increasingly interactive technology is already having on football journalism.

I do have some caveats. There are few grammatical glitches, and some of the throwaway (dare I say, 'journalistic?') asides grate rather than induce smiles. It also occasionally assumes a superiority over its audience's knowledge, a strategy all authors should hesitate to employ. For example, he asks: 'Take knur-and-spell. Heard of it? Didn't think so.' Well, yes, actually, I have heard of it and so will many of his readers. Complaining about the lack of sources for many of the facts and assertions might appear churlish, but despite a comprehensive bibliography the lack of citations annoys the academic in me. It makes it difficult to assess the strength of some of his observations.

But these are very minor irritations in an otherwise pleasurable read. It is rare that such a detailed study is a page-turner to rival any work of popular fiction. To sum up, Domeneghetti's book is a first class examination of the history of football's long journey through the media and is one of my favourite sports books. I recommend reading it just for pleasure.

From the Back Page to the Front Room: Football's journey through the English media Roger Domeneghetti, published by Ockley Books, 2014, Published at £12.99, ISBN: 978-0-9571410-56.

It's all News to Me! By Jeremy Vine

Review by Dr Emma Hemmingway, Nottingham Trent University

It was with unashamed relish that as a former BBC news trainee, I approached Jeremy Vine's new autobiography "It's all News to me!"

Vine is himself a BBC news trainee, part of that select few plucked mainly from Oxbridge for the BBC's training programme with the promise of a position somewhere within the great organisation at the end of it. All of this existed well before we had jobs teaching journalism courses in any UK universities.

And thus to my first warning to those thinking of reading this entertaining and extremely well written book. It is unashamedly rather obsessed with everything BBC.

Not that this doesn't at times make for some very funny stories which Vine, being the witty writer he is, turns into hilarious laugh-out-loud moments. And happily, these jokes in no way spare the author. The young, rather too lofty BBC intern who feels the world owes him some kind of a journalistic living soon comes unstuck in many different ways, often funny and then rather more dangerous as his career begins to develop.

Early on his nascent career awareness affords him such refreshing insights:

"Embrace humiliation: it is good for the soul. Your parade needs regular rain. It is in your interests to be constantly reminded that you are less important than the story, and the moment will never come when you have truly made it."

The strength of the book lies in Vine's ability to turn entertaining stories about news into good workaday mantras for 'doing journalism'- and as educators this book is a helpful and effortlessly readable teaching guide to any student journalist.

"I often murmured to myself, 'Other Lives'. And in essence that is journalism: discovering the other. Because a local newspaper is the only show in town, every story in it is a scoop. Which makes working there the purest and rawest and truest form of broadcasting."

And, in an age when students feel it is unnecessary to pick up a telephone and engage in human contact when FB and Twitter are on hand, accessible and obviously far less threatening...

"The lesson is this: The audience has better stories than we do. I remember at Coventry telling Geoff Grimmer a woman had turned up at reception wanting to talk about her brother who had died suddenly. 'Go down and speak to her', he instructed, thus coining the first commandment of journalism in six short words."

In the best chapter, Vine begins to try to unravel that old favourite: what is news? If you have little appetite for BBC internal machinations, from which this book does unfortunately suffer, you could read just this chapter. It is quotable, debatable and will prove challenging to any student starting on their journalistic road.

"What is news and what is news not? 'News,' it was said, 'is what someone else doesn't want you to know. All the rest is advertising'. Beautiful. And quite wrong. I used to have neighbours who argued all the time. They didn't want me to know that. It doesn't mean that them arguing is news. In fact, once you try to find a definition, you discover exasperating contradictions almost immediately."

Or

"So news is the stuff you don't expect... but even as I write that, I remember watching the most recent royal wedding. That was expected. But it was news, surely. It was scheduled, yes, but it was still news... it raises the frightening possibility that the biggest new stories are not the most unexpected, but the most expected."

In its rather unapologetic immersion in BBC processes there is a worrying section where Vine describes his Radio 2 spoof broadcast which attempted to reveal what news would be like if Britain was run by tabloid news editors.

In this broadcast an item was included claiming Ian Huntley had been murdered in his prison cell. This spoof was broadcast in 2006, just three years after the murders of Soham schoolgirls Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells.

Whilst Vine had emphasised the bulletin was a spoof by introducing it as coming from 'Radio Two and a quarter', the incident raises concerning issues of sensitivity, intrusion into people's grief and, most importantly, breaks one of the most important rules of all news journalism - never report anything which could be misconstrued by an audience.

It was therefore with shock and consternation I read Vine's uncritical rendition of how things had gone

wrong, concluding even though they had made a mistake, the news editor at the time did not discipline anyone and simply said she didn't want the team to stop being creative in future.

This advice was given by then controller of Radio 2, Lesley Douglas. Later she was sacked, along with Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross because of an appalling on-air lapse of taste involving the veteran actor, Andrew Sachs. Perhaps Vine could have acknowledged here that creativity is a great thing, but it's not the ultimate excuse when you do something stupid.

Indeed in light of Vine's trenchant advice to young journalists throughout the book, all of which is pretty spot-on, the unapologetic tone of what was a bad misjudgement leaves an unsavoury taste in the reader's mouth.

I was left wondering why Vine's high minded journalistic perceptions, when pointed at himself, were not rather more condemning and thus more just? I fear the answer to this may lie in the rather self-protecting steps of the very institution which created the highly polished BBC creation that is Jeremy Vine.

It's All News to Me! By Jeremy Vine, published by Simon and Schuster, 2013, 350 pages, ISBN 9 781 84983 777 4, published at £8.99.

Enough Said: What's gone wrong with the language of politics? By Mark Thompson

Review by John Mair, former BBC producer

This is a stunningly good book, thoughtful, well researched, well written and full of prescription. It is not an easy read. Thompson does not carry his lifetime of learning lightly.

Mark is the success story of his journalistic generation. BBC Director General for eight years, who, unusually, left of his own accord. 'Thommo' survived many storms over the BBC to leave it (mainly) intact. Then, in a first for a broadcast executive, he jumped media to the 'print' New York Times as president and chief executive. There he is leading them with some success to the sunny uplands of a digital future, at a price though - Mark may be the most highly paid journalist in the world at a reported \$8M per year!

I must declare an interest. We have been friends for 35 years since the days of Nationwide and, presciently, I did tell a friend in common in 1980: 'That boy will be DG one day!'

None of this shapes my view that this is a magnificent tome. It had its origins in the lectures he delivered as Oxford Professor of Rhetoric at St Peter's College, Oxford, in early 2013 preceded, as is his wont, by a period of heavy reading in the Bodleian Library. It shows. The sources quoted range from Plato to McLuhan and wider.

Thompson attempts to find the place of rhetoric in modern political and media discourse on both sides of the Atlantic. He examines, inter alia, the Brexit and Trump campaigns and sees their disconnect with reality. He uses the Classical Greek concepts of logos (ideas), doxa (opinion) and episteme (understanding) as his template for analysis throughout.

Take just one chapter, his examination of George Orwell's well known 1946 essay on 'Politics and the English language'. The Oxford First in English comes out in his textual analysis of what Orwell meant; the social and political background plus the extra dimension is added with readings from Plato to Wittgenstein, Heidegger to AJ Ayer. Thompson posits the similarities between 1946 and 2016 and the tension between positivism and authenticity: all illustrated by contemporary examples of misuse of English in politics. It is masterly.

That is just one of 12 densely argued and footnoted chapters on an intellectual piste, from spin doctoring to selling, to his final (maybe too late) pleading for a new language of politics from the practitioners and from the media, who sometimes report the former too slavishly.

In that chapter for example, he references the lyrics of Beyonce and Eminem, surely a first for an Oxford Professor of Rhetoric?

Intellectual ambition oozes from every page. Not many media executives could produce a work of this quality and deep thought. Buy it alongside a dictionary, but leave plenty of time to read it, digest it and learn from it.

Enough Said: What's gone wrong with the language of politics? By Mark Thompson, Bodley Head, 2015, RRP £25.

Information for contributors

We accept original articles about journalism education and topics linked to journalism and education that are not offered for publication elsewhere at the time of submission. Articles for peer review should be in the range of 5000-7000 words.

Articles for Comment and Criticism should be shorter at about 3,000 to 4,000 words.

The copy deadline for the next issue is: Aug 30, 2012 but material sent earlier would be appreciated. Articles should be submitted to the editors at ajejournal@gmail.com together with a 100-150 word abstract. Comment and criticism articles can be more polemic and do not require an abstract.

Presentation and submission:

Articles should be produced in Word format, double spaced and set in Times New Roman 12pt with the minimum of formatting. Please **do not** press the “enter” button to put a double space between paragraphs or add additional spaces and do not use specialist templates. Referencing should be in standard Harvard form with citations in the form: (Simmons 1955, p404) whilst notes should be set as endnotes.

All tables and figures should be produced separately either at the end of the article or in a separate file. Each should be clearly labelled Table 1:..... Table 2:..... Fig. 1:.... Fig. 2: etc and a note inserted in the text identifying approximately where it should be placed.

Book Reviews:

Reviews of appropriate books should be approximately 400 words. We do not accept unsolicited reviews of books, but are always grateful to be given the opportunity to consider a review proposal. Please contact Tor Clarke, the reviews editor, if you wish to submit a review. All book reviews should include author, title, ISBN number, publisher, number of pages and price.

Copyright:

Authors should confirm they have cleared all copyrighted work for publication and agree that they will indemnify the editors against claims for defamation, copyright infringement or plagiarism. All authors will be asked to sign a contract confirming this.

Process:

Papers are sent to at least two referees for comment. On return your paper will be accepted, accepted following editing as identified by the referees or refused. Comment and criticism pieces and book reviews will be decided by the editors but may be accepted on the basis that they are edited as identified.

Proofs:

Once accepted, authors are expected to return proofs within 72 hours of receipt.