Welcome back to the Journalism Education reviews section, which this time takes a detailed look at the craft of our top journalists as well as developments in two key areas of journalism – ethics and social media.

By the consent of most, we have never lived through such unprecedented political times. In the UK the knife-edge Brexit vote outcome is still not resolved, continues to claim political casualties and destabilise the entire political system. Across the Atlantic, the world’s most powerful nation has its most unprepared and unpredictable president. Whatever we think of current politics, what is clear is we need good journalists to chronicle them for us.

In the UK Tim Shipman, political editor of the Sunday Times, has emerged as a leading voice, not just in breaking big political stories in his paper every week, but then very soon after the events, publishing books full of first hand accounts of how those events unfolded. All Out War: The Full Story of Brexit is reviewed here because of the insight it offers us on the depth and quality of his political journalism. It’s a book about recent politics which can be read as a thriller but which also contains much useful material for journalism students and scholars, not least the way coverage of Brexit challenged long-held broadcasting conventions.

Over the pond, the most venerated US journalist tackles the most controversial president in Fear: Trump in the White House. Forty-five years after the biggest journalism investigation of all time brought down the most powerful man in the world, Washington Post Watergate reporter Bob Woodward investigates the current White House incumbent, and what he shares with us reviewer John Mair finds deeply troubling. But again, if we can read past our own fear, Woodward also gives us a masterclass in how to painstakingly gather evidence to shed journalistic light on what otherwise would seem a complicated picture.

Professor Richard Keeble of the University of Lincoln has been a leading light in the investigation and study of the role of ethics in journalism. In an increasingly technological profession, ethical issues have multiplied and a new collection of articles, Ethical Reporting of Sensitive Topics, edited by Ann Luce of Bournemouth University, has shone a light on many of these areas. Professor Keeble urges us to consider much of the wisdom on covering difficult topics within this new volume.

Finally, in preparing recent books on the demise of print journalism and on Brexit and Trump, editors John Mair, Tor Clark, Neil Fowler, Raymond Snoddy and Richard Tait, were struck by how important social media was becoming in the operation of both journalism and politics. It prompted them to put together their third collection of academic and journalistic articles Anti-Social Media? The Impact on Journalism and Society.

Paul Lashmar of City University of London has a long and distinguished career in journalism and academia and finds this new collection to be a timely and useful addition to the available literature, ‘capturing the zeitgeist of puzzlement and despair over what is happening to social media’.

So, a small but hopefully useful and relevant mix of texts, which all offer value to students and scholars
All Out War: The Full Story by Tim Shipman
Review by Tor Clark, University of Leicester

By all accounts, we live in unprecedented and unsettling political times. Whilst it does not offer a solution to the UK’s troubles, at least having a thorough chronicler can help us understand what’s happening, and over the past couple of years, Sunday Times political editor Tim Shipman through fantastic contacts and what must have been round-the-clock hard work, has become the chronicler of choice of these political times.

Shipman’s first book was *All Out War*, which covers the 2016 Referendum on EU membership in the UK and subsequent trials of the Labour and Conservative parties. He followed it up with *Fall Out*, which took the story on through Theresa May’s first government and the 2017 General Election. The third part of this unputdownable trilogy, taking us through the Brexit endgame, is currently being assembled.

Shipman’s achievement in covering this complex topic is huge – and it is for what we can learn about 21st century politics and political journalism in particular that his first volume, *All Out War: The Full Story of Brexit*, earns its place in this reviews section.

*All Out War* is a great example of journalism as the first draft of history, the original hardback version being published very soon after the events it describes in 2016. Shipman actually begins his account in what seems like much simpler times, when Prime Minister David Cameron’s instructions to his fellow Tories to ‘stop banging on about Europe’ seemed to have at least temporarily been heeded and he could set about being the first Conservative PM in 13 years having detoxified the Conservative brand.

So it is that Shipman begins his story with the October 2011 rebellion by 81 Conservative MPs on a motion demanding an EU membership referendum, which effectively ended Cameron’s period of grace on Europe as the issue which has so dramatically divided his party for so long. That rebellion, he says, was: ‘The moment a referendum became inevitable.’

He guides us expertly through the build-up from this point until the referendum was announced in February 2016 with enthralling descriptions of the context and the main players around the issues and political parties. At this point the book can be read at bedtime almost as a convoluted yet compelling political thriller – except of course no-one would believe it if it was attempted to be passed off as fiction.

Shipman describes the campaign proper from February to June 2016 in thematic chapters, attempting to draw out the small victories and defeats which may have influenced 600,000 people to vote Leave instead of Remain and thus throw the result to those who wished to leave the EU.

There then follows expert description of the fall-out from the referendum result, especially on the leadership of the Conservative Party, but also on its impact on Labour, demonstrating controversial leader Jeremy Corbyn’s iron resolve to remain leader even when the vast majority of his MPs were happy to state they had no confidence in his leadership.

And a masterly concluding chapter goes back through all the evidence presented and picks out the reasons Remain lost and Leave won in compelling detail. His conclusion, having taken all this evidence into account, if an easy conclusion to these complicated events is possible, is simply that the winning side wanted their victory more and were prepared to do more, with more passion than the Remain ers, to get it. This is a theme common in other early studies of this seismic political decision.

For scholars and students of journalism, worth the cover price on its own is chapter 17 *Aunty Beeb*, about how the BBC’s political rules, set up to govern the coverage of multi-party politics-as-usual were tested to breaking point by the binary EU referendum. Issues around impartiality, balance and how far journalists should challenge politicians’ assertions are central to the conduct of democracy and in this chapter they get a full airing, complete with many relevant examples. This chapter should be on every political journalism course’s reading list.
In the opening acknowledgements, Shipman notes the huge numbers of important players who spoke to him with their accounts of sometimes contested events. Many more top political operators spoke to him anonymously. What is clear here is everyone who was anyone in this process confided in this journalist because they knew they needed their particular point of view to be represented. It seems Shipman’s success here is to make talking to him vital for any player.

In this way Shipman takes us into very small gatherings of the people at the centre of events, offering verbatim quotes on the reactions of the principal players, originally heard by only a handful of participants. He takes a novelist’s delight in offering small but intimate details of what people said, did and their physical surroundings to demonstrate his access and the authority of his sources.

And it is for this access, these sources, those details, that this book earns its place as a work of journalism and can be learned from by would-be journalists. Shipman describes the scenarios we all knew about from the news at the time, but then takes us behind the scenes to what was said and how decisions were made. We are with David Cameron and George Osborne as the results come in the early hours of June 24, 2016. We are in a taxi with Tory MPs Boris Johnson and Nick Boles as Johnson tries to form his declaration speech for Tory leader in July 2016, while Boles starts to worry that his companion isn’t fit to PM and his erstwhile ally Michael Gove should run against him, just hours before all that happened.

We can only wonder about the hundreds of conversations Shipman has had in a vast array of locations with huge numbers of political operators, the notes he made and then the organisation of those notes into this coherent narrative. But what we do know is he has established that trust, built those contacts and assembled all the information he needed to write this definite account through his own journalistic skills and professional reputation, and what it has given us is an account which explains the nuances at the very top of this most dramatic and complex period of UK political history.

Of course, unlike academic texts, it is a descriptive piece of journalism rather than a detailed critical analysis, so he gleefully describes the events as they unfold without commenting upon them or applying much criticality until the concluding chapter. But that in a sense is what this book is there for. The detailed analysis would come later. For now, Shipman has put us in the room as these events unfolded at the highest level and in so doing, been a real advocate for and exemplar of his craft.


Anti-Social Media? The Impact on Journalism and Society Edited by John Mair, Tor Clark, Neil Fowler, Raymond Snoddy and Richard Tait

Review by Paul Lashmar, City University of London.

The one country which has so far successfully – and I use the word advisedly – regulated social media is China, as Peter Bazalgette, the former ITV chairman, notes in his chapter in Anti-Social Media? The impact on Journalism and Society.

China has created its own hermetic internet and the state has created its own copies of social media including variants on the Twitter and Facebook concepts. Apparently, this has prevented much of the uglier activity social media activity by trolls, far right propagandists and buccaneering capitalists common elsewhere.

The Chinese are big social media users but are cautious, as they full-well know, the authoritarian state has ‘moderators’ on an industrial scale monitoring for untoward activity. The downside of this orderly environment is that users know if you say anything the Communist Party will not like you will be in trouble. Among the taboos is mention of Tiananmen Square circa 1989, the repression of the Uighurs and the Tibetans. Ergo, China does not provide a regulation model for the democratic world. So who does?

Whether to regulate and if so, how, is an unresolved theme running through Anti-Social Media? One thing that is agreed is Mark Zuckerburg does not have the answer, even with Facebook’s recently recruited global
Anti-Social Media?" is the 26th book in John Mair’s (and friends’) series of ‘hackacademic’ books, a format which emphasises the primacy of expertise and speed of delivery of contributors’ chapters over their length and academic depth. And this volume is one of the most timely, reinforcing the value of the speed dating format, capturing the zeitgeist of puzzlement and despair over what is happening to social media.

Anti-Social Media? examines the impact of the internet on journalism, a question still painfully festering. If the techno giants have sucked up most of the advertising revenue, they have also unleashed a series of plagues on the world including a plague of trolls, a plague of uber-consumer capitalists and a plague of political manipulators among them. But, the backdrop of this collection is how the techno-optimism of the early days of social media has turned to a state of widespread alarm on what it is doing not only to the media but the nation at large.

The 40, mostly well informed, well referenced, if pithy takes on the conundrums of social media are invaluable to students and academics alike as a quick immersion for any essay on this vexed subject. The focus is Anglo-American and the chapters have a fair bit of overlap, which would be a narrative disaster in a one-author book but gives this edited collection thematic coherence.

As Ivor Gaber notes many early adopters saw social media as the utopian realisation of Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, where citizens would be informed and debate the important democratic questions. How did these, ‘starry eyed dreamers’ as Gaber encapsulates them, not foresee the dark side of social media?

Richard Sambrook starts his chapter with a droll Alcoholics Anonymous style confession to having been a social media evangelist. ‘Yes, I know, shameful and hard to believe’, he laments. Neil Fowler asks whether journalism should stay off social media, portrayed as the internet’s hard stuff. Christian Fuchs observes that social media data harvesting and analytics have proven enablers to unfettered consumerism creating a late capitalist culture of alienation. Fuchs also manages to link the Cambridge Analytica/Facebook scandal with Marx’s bicentenary. Gaber posits that Twitter’s character limit ‘gives Twitter its essential characteristic of simplicity, impulsivity and uncivility, the characteristics which have come to form a toxic combination which, in the political sphere has, almost inevitably, led to the establishing of the primacy of emotion over reason.’

The shock which reverberates through these pages is that a worrying percentage of our fellow citizens are prepared to say appalling things to other people online, often using a pseudonym, that one would hope they would not dream of saying if they were sitting in the same room as their victims. Civilisation, it seems, is a thin veneer.

In John Naughton’s excellent and informative chapter on the profit-motivated Zuckerberg and his Frankenstein monster Facebook, he points out that algorithms: ‘In a metaphorical sense, therefore, users of social media are unwitting rats in Skinnerian mazes created for their delectation.’

Naughton’s chapter is worth the price of the book alone as he also confronts an ontological crisis. ‘On the demand side, human psychology and sociality play important roles in keeping the machine humming. Humans are famously subject to a wide range of cognitive biases, which social media exploit.’ He notes the prevalence of the evils of confirmation bias, hyperbolic discounting and homophily. In the 21st century, even among an increasingly well-educated public, many users would rather have their biases reinforced than engage in constructive discussion. This online Sodom and Gomorrah is a moral failure of the species that may yet prove terminal, and nowhere more could degradation be more naked than in the Trump and Brexit debacles.

Speaking of Brexit, the Cambridge Analytica scandal is mentioned, in passing, as signal moment in many chapters and if I have one criticism of the collection, it is that there is no in-depth look at the Brexit referendum in terms of the role of social media and the national media. In years to come, when we understand the power of social media manipulation better, there will be a much-needed referendum inquiry and it will likely conclude that referendum vote was not sound. By which time it will be too late.

So where is journalism in all of this? Leading contributors including Alan Rusbridger and Mark Thompson emphasise the need for high quality journalism where the need for content that is regulated, truthful, accurate, balanced and verified has never been greater. The question hangs whether the public will realise this early enough to retain a professional ethical media or will prefer to just have their biases stroked.

Ethical Reporting of Sensitive Topics, edited by Ann Luce

Review by Professor Richard Lance Keeble, University of Lincoln

When, during the late 1990s, I was writing the first edition of my book on journalism ethics, journo friends and colleagues would joke: ‘Oh, that’s not going to be a very long book, then.’ Or ‘Not much to say about that is there?’

Matters have changed somewhat since then (though the myth of the rowdy hack pack, merciless in pursuit of its prey, still survives in Hollywood blockbusters and the seemingly endless TV detective series). And this text provides clear proof that many journalists are now committed to confronting the ethical challenges that come with the reporting of sensitive subjects.

Edited by Ann Luce, of Bournemouth University, it draws together the work of 12 distinguished international journalists-turned academics, tackles an impressive array of topics and blends theoretical background, practical tips and cases studies (sometimes drawn from personal experience) to highlight good and bad practice.

Mathew Charles, for instance, looks at the reporting of urban violence and gangs. He suggests, in much of the mainstream reporting: ‘The complexity of the structures that underpin urban violence is ignored in favour of simple narratives which can glorify gang culture, exploit victims and exacerbate social inequalities. In worst cases, journalism propagates the position of the state which can scapegoat gangs and communities in order to conceal its own failures or political motivations’ (p121).

Ethical coverage, he writes, would rather be critical of the established discourse on violence, question the role of the state, report and analyse all sides of the argument, treat all parties as equals, would not rely only on official press releases – and seek our contacts in the ‘criminal’ world. Charles then presents three case studies: in the first, he explores, critically, the ethical challenges he faced in filming the fragile and controversial 2012 truce brokered between El Salvador’s two largest gangs, MS-13 and 18 Street. How to deal with horrific images (such as that of a naked 16-year-old boy dumped on a concrete slab). How to avoid sensationalising the topic. How to challenge the perpetrators of the violence most appropriately. (pp123-126).

Next, in reflecting on his reporting on Colombia’s biggest criminal network, he debates the issues surrounding the naming of names. He writes: ‘If they were omitted, it could be clear to the rest of the gang who had been speaking to me. I decided to leave this decision to each contributor. I explained what the consequences might be and left it to them to decide if they wanted to be included or omitted’ (p128). In the third case study, about a senior Colombian paramilitary, questions relating to managing risks are considered. Charles concludes by encouraging journalists to establish an independent narrative ‘to ensure fair and balanced reporting, which does not scapegoat gangs and communities affected by violence’ (p130).

John Lister, in his chapter on health reporting, spends some time highlighting the failures of mainstream journalists. His case studies examine the ‘ill-judged panic’ in 2017 after the media linked heart failure to the use of the drug ibuprofen, misleading claims over ‘clinically proven’ ear plugs, and the inadequate coverage of the setting up of accountable care organisations. As models for good journalism, Lister recommends the British website Behind the Headlines (www.nhs.uk/news) and the American website healthnewsreview.org for its archive of articles (pp137-155).

Elsewhere, Chris Frost stresses the importance of maintaining high standards: ‘Getting the story does not mean behaving unethically, but it may mean working a little harder’ (p24). Lyn Barnes advises journalists covering emotional and traumatic stories on a regular basis to take self-care seriously: ‘Simple steps include deep breathing exercises, which have shown to be important for the brain, and recognising any signs of stress you are feeling: for example, a twitchy eye or broken sleep.’

Amanda Gearing’s chapter offers many useful insights on the reporting of child sexual abuse. Ann Luce tackles the complex ethical issues involved in reporting suicide. Glynn Greensmith, in his piece on mass shootings, is able to conclude on a positive note: ‘Increasingly, news outlets, law enforcement officers and public officials have refused to name the shooter… and this suggests a new appetite for understanding the ramifications of the dominant narrative of coverage of these crimes’ (p112).

And Kim Walsh-Childers highlights the problems in covering health research and interventions – carefully listing ten major related questions. For instance, does the story use independent sources and identify conflicts of interest? Does the story compare the new approach with existing alternatives? Does the story...
Shelley Thompson and Hilary Stepden cover the reporting of emerging and controversial science (pp179-198). Robert Wyss tackles climate change reporting (pp 199-213). Amanda Gearing, in her second chapter, argues journalists who prepare for this assignment by experimenting with social media platforms to gather and hold exclusive information ‘will lay a firm foundation for trust between them and their news contacts’ (p230).

In a final, important section on reporting cultural, ethnic and geographical difference, Alexandra Wake tackles covering ‘other’ cultures (pp235-25) and Jeremiah M Opiniano, of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Philippines, draws on the work of the Ethical Journalism Network in his recommendations for the better reporting of international migration (pp251-273).

Overall, this is an outstanding collection of essays. But I’m surprised issues relating to undercover reporting are little considered. While teaching at the University of Lincoln, I launched a BA in Investigative Journalism and students would regularly go undercover (all in accordance with the university’s research ethical guidelines). How can investigative reporting, particularly on sensitive topics, be conducted otherwise?

And in the discussions on source confidentiality, there is no mention of the implications for journalists of Edward Snowden’s 2013 revelations about the massive surveillance of electronic communications by the US and UK governments – nor any mention of the evidence of police snooping on reporters covering sensitive topics. Should not all journalism students be trained in encryption techniques? But then, given the abilities now of intelligence services to break through encrypted data, what are the solutions for journalists in maintaining the confidentiality and trust of their sources?

And in the list of groups young journalists need to be aware of – in addition to colleagues, sources and audience (p12) – should not owners and trade unions be included? Indeed, is it not important for students to be aware of the political economy of the media and of the crucial role of the alternative/non-corporate media – all the more so since these often carry the best coverage of sensitive subjects?


Fear – Trump in the White House

by Bob Woodward

Review by John Mair, editor of the ‘Hackademic’ series of books on contemporary journalism

This, quite simply, is a brilliant book. Every Journalism 101 course should have it right at the top of its reading list. Every wannabe, got-there and has-been hack should read it.

Woodward is a legend in our craft after Watergate and defenestrating President Richard Nixon with his fellow Washington Post reporter Carl Bernstein in 1974. He was even played by Robert Redford in Alan J Pakua’s Hollywood film of the Watergate investigation All The President’s Men (1976). Reading this book, you understand why he is feted. It is deep, thorough, thoughtful and accurate first person reporting. Woodward does what journalists do best, talking to people, on or off the record, deep background or however, getting their stories, putting them into shape and telling them as a superb narrative.

Journalism this way is quite simple. People, some of them once important in the Trump White House, talking. Michael Wolff got there first in his Fire and Fury published in 2018. Wolff said he sat on a sofa in the White House West Wing and took in the ambience and the gossip. He took notes but his book still ended up as the gospel according to Steve Bannon. Woodward’s book is fish and fowl to Wolff’s. Woodward did 160 (yes, 160) interviews for his tome. But the views of at least three staff and ex-staffers still shine through. Gary Cohn, the former economic adviser to Trump, John Dowd his former lead counsel and John Kelly, his Chief of Staff, are there on most pages. Kelly called his boss ‘an idiot. We are in Crazytown’. Mild for those around DJT.

I never used to believe re-constructed conversations especially when historic. Do you really remember
what you said last week? Now I am a convert. Woodward has carefully and perfectly reconstructed conversations based on the deep testimony of those 160 interviews with those closest to the 45th President of the USA. They are gob-smacking and make for riveting reading. Can the Trump White House really be this chaotic and subject to the whims of a sociopath who happens to have convinced the gullible American public to put him there (just)? Is he really a foul-mouthed tyrant who alternately belittles and shouts at his advisers? Do they have to devise strategies to stop him falling off mental and political cliffs, like removing Executive Orders from his desk to stop him signing them? The answer, sadly, according to Woodward, is a firm yes.

No writer of fiction, like Aaron Sorkin who created TV’s The West Wing, could make up the happenings in Trumpland DC. There is simply no rhyme, reason or rationale to explain how The Donald governs or behaves every day. This book suggests he makes it up as he goes along. It is terrifying.

His cast of advisers is rotated by design. Absolute monarchs rule that way. Some supplicants at the court burn out, some are summarily fired but too many of them are left with a loathing and a strong feeling that DJT is a ‘professional liar’ as one put it in his testimony in Fear.

Trump is the spoilt rich kid from NYC. The business and reality success story is in the real world a bankrupt and one who has consistently mixed with a bad business crowd. His anti-biographer David Cay Johnston demonstrates that in his masterly tome The Making of Donald Trump. Cay Johnston has tracked Trump for a quarter of a century. In my Oxford garden last summer he revealed untold tales which made the little hair I have left stand on end.

Trump has been given all the toys, some of them nuclear, by the American electorate. He throws them out of the pram regularly with much noise. He cannot read an A4 page brief to the bottom and gets his news and world views from Fox News. He is a semi-intelligent rich redneck. If it is not on Sean Garrity on Fox then it is not on his radar.

If you want to experience Fear just read the chapter on how he wanted to rip up all the US deals with South Korea, including withdrawing US troops, because he simply could not see the point. His people persuaded him out of that and later he said he was ‘in love’ with Kim Jong Un, the North Korean dictator, and vice versa, after their Singapore summit.

Woodward is a professional digger. Some worried he had lost his edge in recent years. Those fears were unfounded. Fear is a masterpiece of journalism. This time round he has struck another seam of gold in the madness of King Donald. On reading this book one can almost see the blood in the water from the great lumps he has taken out of the ‘RealDonald’ whale. Time will tell if Trump joins Nixon in the graveyard of Woodward presidential victims.

Reading books like this restores your faith in the power of journalism.

New and forthcoming books

Look out for the latest books from these AJE members. If you have written a book due for publication shortly, be sure to let other AJE members know about by contacting the editor on ajejournal@gmail.com giving the book title, author, publisher and date of publication.

Two new books due to be published this autumn are:


*Privacy and the News Media* is the latest book from Chris Frost and this is due for publication by Routledge on November 18, 2019, just in time for Christmas.


Apology and correction

Apologies to Professor Richard Keeble. A recent paper published in Journalism Education: ‘Exploring the transition from journalism practitioner to journalism educator’ by Catherine Russell and Sue Eccles and wrongly quoted Richard Keeble to the effect that he supported the view that journalism was ‘best learned on the job’. Rather, Keeble said that this was the dominant view in the industry until quite recently. But he disagrees with it strongly.
Style guide

Please provide a title and an abstract and author details together with a 50-70 word biography for each author on a separate sheet to allow for anonymization. This sheet will be separated from the article before being sent to referees so please put the title only at the start of the article.

• Sub-heads should be in bold
• Second order sub-heads should be in bold italic
• Please use single quotation marks (double quotation marks for a quote within a quote)
• Indent long quotes of two lines or more.
• Please do not use the enter button to insert space between paragraphs or headings.
• All illustrations, tables and figures should be sent separately either at the end of the MS Word file or as attached JPGs. Clearly label approximately where they should be placed with fig 1, table 1 etc.

Citations and bibliographic references should be in Harvard style.

Part I: Citations

Place references in your work in the following order: Name, Date: page number(s)

For example,

1. Directly quoting an author
   It is sometimes forgotten that ‘English is one of the most flexible and expressive languages in the world’ (Hicks, 1993, p.1)
   He goes on to say, ‘In brief, the reigning media consensus has been characterised either as overly liberal or leftist or as conservative, depending on the view of the critic’ (McQuail, 1992, pp.255-6).

2. Indirectly quoting an author (where you sum up what is being stated in your own words). This must be grammatically correct, as well as accurate.
   E.g.: Hargreaves (2003, p.47) believes that Henry Hetherington’s populist journalistic techniques, employed by him in the 1830s, were the basis of tabloid journalism.

3. Referring broadly to ideas you have read in a publication (not to a specific point/quote). You don’t need to cite page number in this case. E.g.: Franklin (1997) has highlighted the effects and reasons for so-called dumbing down in the media.

4. If the same person is referred to immediately after a previous citation, you can use ibid.

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A list of Bibliographic References is required at the end. Please provide the FULL name of the author (including first name) and provide references in alphabetical order of surname. With an author who has written a number of books and articles that have been cited, list them all separately, with the most recent first (see Manning).

Examples of how to present Bibliographic references for Journalism Education are given below

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A three-way intersection to The Junction: publishing opportunity, aspiration and reticence of journalism students at an Australian regional university Janet Fulton, Paul Scott, Felicity Biggins and Christina Koutsoukos, University of Newcastle, Australia,
The boundaries of belonging: journalist interns’ workplace learning experiences across communities of practice Maarit Jaakkola, Tampere University, Finland
Representation of British footballers in the press: private versus public performance Maria Dot Grau and Lily Canter, Sheffield Hallam University

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