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## “U.S. Literary Journalism from Theory to Praxis”

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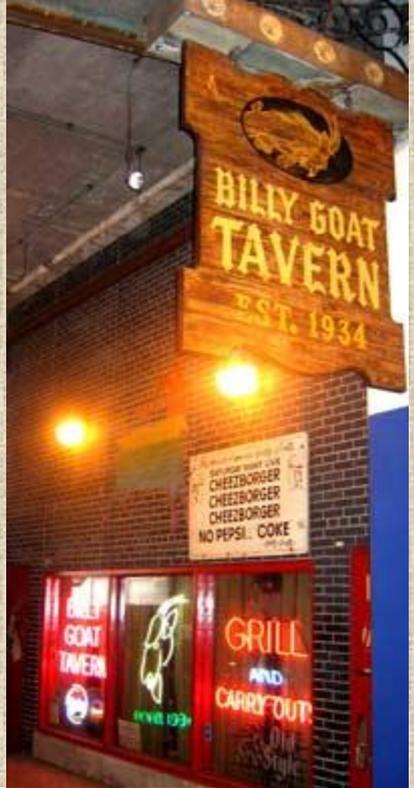
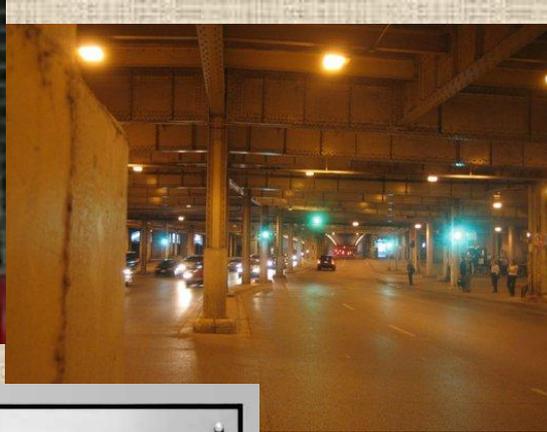
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**Seminar 1:**  
**“U.S. Literary Journalism from  
Theory to Praxis”**

**John S. Bak**  
**Université de Lorraine, France**





## Mike Royko



If you're not bellying up to the bar, have a seat at one of the red & white checkered tables near the bar or on the other side of the grill in the "Wall of Fame" section. This area features photographs of local celebrities and yellowed articles written by famous Chicago newspaper columnists from the nearby Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun Times like Dave Condon, Bill Granger, John Kass, Rick Kogan, Richard Roeper, Rick Telender and Irv Kupcinec. One of the largest "displays" is dedicated to the legendary Pulitzer Prize-winning Trib columnist, Mike Royko, and is comprised of photos, columns, and a memorial written by Royko following the passing of Billy Goat Sianis himself. In it, Royko declares Sianis the "Greatest Innkeeper in Chicago."

Royko was often found each day after work, holding court down at the Billy Goat. He would entertain crowds by espousing local politics as the "voice of the little guy." Most of his reader and colleagues would say that he was "Mr. Chicago." His columns would consist of stories that described the different events and characters that brought out the true Chicago. Sam and Billy Goat Sianis acknowledged Mike Royko as a part of their family and he treated the Billy Goat as his home. Royko wrote many articles about events that happened at the Billy Goat or about Sam and his adventures. That is why Royko had such a following, because along with writing about the big events around the world, he also wrote about "the little guy", which his readers could relate to. He knew how to tell the "bar stories" or the "neighborhood stories" which many lived through. When people wanted to discuss what Mike Royko had written, they knew they could find him at the Billy Goat to express their views on his columns. Mike Royko would be more than happy to backup what was written.

The Billy Goat Tavern is still frequented by many of Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times writers of today and is considered a media hangout.



**“*Sez Who? Sez Mike: Royko,*  
**Literary Journalism and  
Chicagoese”****

Often called the voice of the Chicago Everyman, *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Mike Royko captured in newsprint what the voices in the Chicago streets were saying. Tough, gritty, always controversial, Royko used his column to keep Chicago Mayor Daley and his powerful political machine under constant scrutiny. From his best seller *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (1971) to his Pulitzer for political commentary the following year, Royko simply *was* Chicago, and his syndication in several hundred newspapers nationwide only served to show readers from other major U.S. cities and small towns just how “Chicago” Daley was as well.

When a reporter called and asked Royko his opinion on a high school banning his book about Mayor Daley, he replied that:

I feel fortunate that a book of mine, that has absolutely no sex, and only a few quotations containing swear words, should have a chance to be banned anywhere.

The reporter still didn't understand. “Why do you want it banned? Don't you want people to read it?”

Of course I do. That's why I want it banned. There's nothing that can stimulate interest in a book as quickly as when somebody tries to ban it. Now I know how the one hundred-year-old man felt when he was hit with a paternity suit. “I didn't do it, but I'll be downright proud to plead guilty.”

Frequently using literary conventions such as satire, irony, wit and understatement to make his points, Royko also resorted to “conversations” with his dramatis personae (i.e., Slats Grobnik, a popular literary character of Polish working-class descent, or Dr. I. B. Kookie), setting himself up as the journalistic straw man to his characters’ more sardonic, often unpolitically-correct social and political criticism. These literary techniques were not new to Chicago journalism, however. The tradition dates back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to writers Opie Read, George Ade and Finely Peter Dunne of the Whitechapel Club, and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with Ben Hecht, co-author of *The Front Page*. Both Norm Sims and John Hartsock trace this Chicago tradition in their respective histories of literary journalism in America, with Hartsock even singaling Rokyo out as its heir.

Like the Whitechapel journalists before him, Royko used voice and caricature in his columns to lend a literary quality to his hard-nosed reporting. Specifically in *Sez Who? Sez Me* (1983), which covers the national angst from the Watergate scandal to just after the Iran hostage crisis, Royko adopted the “voice” of Chicago’s Mayor Daley not only to demonstrate the strength of its political vacuity but also, like the Boss himself, to win over his own public.

## Earlier Chicago Voices

In *True Stories*, Norm Sims discusses how early Chicago columnists Opie Read and George Ade established the city's penchant for journalistic irony. Like his contemporary Mark Twain, Read first wrote humoristic sketches that reproduced the local patois of the working and agrarian classes. By the time Read moved to Chicago, journalism there had turned toward the literary realism of social problems (Sims 57), and with him there, "literary journalism has the opportunity to emerge from the domain of rural storytellers and sketch writers and into the mass-circulation mainstream of American newspapers" (Sims 57). At a time when news stories were still being fabricated, as Sims writes, editors began taking more control of the stories and became "facts conscious"—wanting reporters to bring back information packaged in an almost scientific fashion" (Sims 58). Since the "sketch" did not survive this trend toward facts, as Sims explains, budding literary journalists were forced out of the papers or to revamp their literary styles or into fiction proper (Sims 59). One way that Read and other urban reporters like Ade and Dunne responded to these new demands was in writing facts-conscious stories but in the voices of the Chicago people.

## **Earlier Chicago Voices**

**Having formed the Whitechapel Club in 1890, they created “an attitude and a style that framed their identity”:**

**In part, that identity included a cynicism that helped them deal with emotions generated by poverty, death, and urban struggle that were everyday stories on the streets. In part, it was a literary identification with the new style of realism. And in part, it was a reaction to the forces that sought to strip storytelling out of the newspapers. (Sims 60)**

## **Earlier Chicago Voices**

**They frequently adopted the “twin defenses of cynicism and sentimentalism” (Sims 62) to deal with the city’s palpable divide between the rich “meatpackers, commodities traders and real estate developers” (Sims 62) and the poor, often exploited immigrants who made up the majority of the city’s population. It was this “cynical” and “sentimental” voice in tackling the social issues of the Chicago streets that Royko inherited and brought to a new level of political proaction in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

## Earlier Chicago Voices

In *Sez Who? Sez Me*, as in his earlier collections, Royko relies heavily upon these “twin defenses” when speaking out against widespread political corruption in Chicago, one that was at the heart of the riots of the 1968 Democratic Convention that kept Mayor Daley from ascending the national political ladder. Corrupt language hides corrupt politics, as George Orwell demonstrated, and Royko perfectly understood the power of Mayor Daley’s Chicagoese, which equated eloquence and grace with political weakness in a city famous for its political hot air and the big shoulders necessary to defend it. Criticizing the machine through its own language—in particular, the key Chicago term “clout”—Royko was able to draw in working-class readers who were frequently supportive of Daley’s “apparent” blue-collar agenda.

## Earlier Chicago Voices

For instance, in one column, “What ‘Clout’ Is and Isn’t” (7 June 1973), Royko berates non-Chicagoans for having misappropriated the Chicago word: “That word is ‘clout,’ and it has been part of the City Hall vocabulary for years. A while back, a mascara-smearing editor at *Vogue* magazine wrote an item about it—getting the Chicago meaning thoroughly goofed up—and ‘clout’ was snatched up in New York and Washington and other provinces” (100). For Royko and for Mayor Daley, “Clout is used to circumvent the law, not to enforce it. It is used to bend rules, not to follow them” (101).

Royko then provides an example of this Daley-esque Chicagoese:

# “What ‘Clout’ Is and Isn’t” (7 June 1973)

“So this beef comes in from a goo-goo that I asked him to make the drop, but just when it looked like I was gonna be vised, my Chinaman clouted for me downtown and it was all squared.” Which, in a foreign language, would mean: A complaint was made by a do-gooder that I solicited a bribe from him, but just when it appeared that I would be fired, my sponsor intervened in my behalf, and the complaint was suppressed in City Hall. Or as a pious payroller might say: The mayor is my clout; I shall not want. (102)

**“We must try to preserve the purity of Chicagoese” (102), Royko ironically concludes, not because it keeps Chicago’s rough identity pristine, but because without the language there would be no Daley and no political machine—and without Daley (whose son later became Mayor of Chicago), there would no Chicago, and without Chicago, no Royko.**

# Caricatures

Had Royko tried writing his five columns per week in a voice more fitting his liberal intellectualism, he simply would not have had as much influence over his non-nonsense Chicago readers as he did for most of his 33-year career. Proof of that lies in his repeated use of characters/caricatures that allowed him the freedom to voice his opinions as “a little guy” but safely in the voice of another. Again, this tradition dates back nearly a century in the Chicago press. As Sims notes, the vernacular moved from the streets and into the press in Georgian London with Addison, Steele and Defoe, but the plain style would become the standard American voice in the press by the realist movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The plain style lacks the “rhetorical flourishes and complicated structures” (Sims 78) or rhetorical style. As Hugh Kenner writes, “Gradually newspapers gravitated toward the plain style, the style of all styles that was patently trustworthy [. . .]. A man who doesn’t make his language ornate cannot be deceiving us; so runs the hidden premise” (qtd. in Sims 79).

# Caricatures

Hartsock concurs, adding that “the adoption of fictional characters to commentate on contemporary life is not uncommon” (36)—with early examples dating back to *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*.

Plain style was readily available in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chicago press thanks to the use of character voices. George Ade in his column “Stories of the Streets and of the Town” created fictional character types like Pink Marsh, a black barber, and an office worker, Min Sargent (Sims 65), to add local color to the plain style that was being called for in the press of the day. These types, Sims adds, gave Ade the powerful voice of Chicago’s laborer, often concluding, as would Royko, “with a moral that was ironic or cynical and always entertaining” (65).

# Caricatures

**Like Finely Peter Dunne, George Ade dealt with these characters types who “represented aspects of community culture as it was expressed in the emerging cityscape of the twentieth century” and who represented for Ade an “urban shorthand [. . .] to introduce the players in the game of urban living” (Sims 66, 69). Names like Caddy or Tycoon or the Roomer “embodied a distinct symbolic world within the city” (Sims 69). This concept of character types “drew from both sociology and the literary conversation about realism” (Sims 69).**

# Caricatures

Hartsock adds that Chicago not only “had its own homegrown school of narrative literary journalism that included in the 1890s George Ade and to a lesser degree Finley Peter Dunne” but singles out Dunne’s ‘Mr. Dooley’ columns as having “openly engaged in fictionalizing” (35), which would become the major criticism toward Royko’s columns as well. Hartsock warns that Dunne and Ade both need to be studied closely in order to separate their factual reporting from their fictionalizations.

# Caricatures

Hartsock suggests that their “liberties” as columnists that “conventional hard news reporters” (35) did not have was what gave the possibilities to write literary journalism, which is also perhaps the case with Royko. As Hartsock notes, “In those liberties can be detected a problem of scholarship. The newspaper columnist has considerable latitude not only in what he or she writes, but in *how* what is written is presented” (35).

Columnists “can write at will in discursive or narrative modes” (35). These short-form literary journalists should not be overlooked.

# Caricatures

Similarly, Dunne's character, the bar owner Mr. Dooley, allowed him to filter "his radicalism" and to express "his opinions in an even-tempered way" (Sims 73). Mr. Dooley "commented on the quiriness of Chicago ward politics, and later on national politics" (Sims 73), always in a strong Irish brogue:

It bates th' wurld. An' what's it comin' to? You an' me looks at a Chinyman as though he wasn't good f'r anything but washin' shirts, an' not very good at that. 'Tis wan if th's sports iv th' youth iv our gr-eat cities to rowl an impty beer keg down th' steps iv a Chinee laundry, an' if e'er a Chinyman come out to resint it they'd take him be th' pigtail an' do th' joint swing with him. (qtd. in Sims 73).

# Caricatures

**This use of the journalistic patois as representative of the Chicago voice at the turn of the century would come to mark the tradition of the Chicago press that Royko would inherit, to which he would later add Polish, Italian and Greek – as made famous in John Belushi's character in the *Saturday Night Live* sketch.**

**Royko imitated this tradition with his character Slats Grobnik, who voiced similarly bigoted responses that were meant to counter what he considered to be the excessive chauvinism of American feminism or the virulent hypocrisy of American liberalism in the mid- to late-1970s. More often than not, Grobnik, like Dunne's Mr. Dooley, made direct or indirect comments toward the Chicago political machine.**

# **“Best Witches from Slats”**

## **(31 October 1973)**

**Slats didn't go trick-or-treating either [. . .]. Slats would pull a nylon stocking over his head and face, turn out all the lights in the flat, and wait. When there was a knock on the door, his little brother Fats would yank it open. For a moment, the little kids outside would see nothing. Then Slats would click on a flashlight held to his chin. In broad daylight, Slats had a face that made some old ladies cross themselves. And with the stocking and the flashlight in the dark, the effect was ghastly. Most of the kids would scream, drop their bags of candy, and run. Then Slats and Fats would gather up the bags, take them inside, close the door, and wait for the next bunch. Slats justified this practice by saying: “You don't see the alderman going door-to-door to get this; so why should I?” (259)**

## Caricatures

While Royko was never one to hide his social or political criticism behind the likes of a Slat Grobnik, the composite character did lend Royko's writing a literary touch on par with the local color and authenticity of Ade's and Dunne's earlier columns, as the column's parable sets forward. Every Chicagoan knew that Royko had set out to be Daley's *bête noir*; thus when his criticism of local politics came through Slat instead, it seemed as if Chicago itself was complaining.

## Caricatures

**When Daley died in 1976, Royko wrote his final “Tribute” (21 December 1976) to the Mayor. In it, Royko is as critical of the man as he is admiring of the machine that the man controlled. As Royko writes,**

**If a man ever reflected a city, it was Richard J. Daley and Chicago. In some ways, he was this town at its best—strong, hard-driving, working feverishly, pushing, building, driven by ambition so big they seemed Texas-boastful. In other ways, he was this city at its worst—arrogant, crude, conniving, ruthless, suspicious, intolerant. He wasn’t graceful, suave, witty, or smooth. But, then, this is not Paris or San Francisco. He was raucous, sentimental, hot-tempered, practical, simple, devious, big, and powerful. This is, after all, Chicago. (95)**

# **“A Tribute”**

## **(21 December 1976)**

**Daley was not an articulate man, most English teachers would agree. People from other parts of the country sometimes marvelled that a politician who fractured the language so thoroughly could be taken so seriously. Well, Chicago is not an articulate town, Saul Bellow notwithstanding. Maybe it's because so many of us aren't that far removed from parents and grandparents who know only bits and pieces of the language. So when Daley slid sideways into a sentence, or didn't exit from the same paragraph he entered, it amused us. But it didn't sound that different than the way most of us talk. Besides, he got his point across, one way or another, and usually in Chicago style. When he thought critics should mind their own business about the way he handed out insurance business to his sons, he tried to think of a way to say they should kiss his bottom. He found a way. He said it. We understood it. What more can one ask of the language? (95)**

**Though he wrote from a position of (moral) authority, Royko used voice as did Ade, Dunne and Read to give the impression of “stumbling along a confusing pathway with the reader and seeking enlightenment” (Sims 79), which is why his columns were so well adapted to both blue and white collar readers in Chicago. But what amused the readers did not always amuse the powers that be. For all of his local and national political commentary, in particular of the FBI’s handling of the King assassination, Royko had an FBI file.**

**In one memo a SAC (special agent in charge), M. W. Johnson, wrote,**

FROM : SAC, CHICAGO

ATTN: CRIME RECORDS

SUBJECT: ~~MIKE ROYKO~~  
COLUMNIST, CHICAGO DAILY NEWS  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
INFORMATION CONCERNING

Chicago Daily News

Enclosed herewith are two copies of ROYKO's article appearing in today's issue of the Chicago Daily News. The first copy is the one that appeared in the first edition and the second copy is the copy which received the widest distribution in Chicago and appeared in subsequent editions.

The Bureau is well aware of the irresponsible reporting on the part of the Chicago press and the enclosed column certainly gives further indication of their complete irresponsibility. ROYKO prides himself in "satirical comedy" and would be the first to admit that much of the material which he writes as satire is not true, but is being done in the interest of humor. He is the type of writer who never has a good word to say about anybody or anything.

,

**What better testimony could there be for a Chicago literary journalist like Royko whose columns were frequently written or set in his favorite bar, Billy Goat's Tavern?**

# What, then, is Literary Journalism and how did we arrive at a Mike Royko?

## Tom Wolfe, from *The New Journalism* (1973)

**Scene by scene construction.** Rather than rely on second-hand accounts and background information, Wolfe considers it necessary for the journalist to witness events first hand, and to recreate them for the reader.

**Dialogue.** By recording dialogue as fully as possible, the journalist is not only reporting words, but defining and establishing character, as well as involving the reader.

**The third person.** Instead of simply reporting the facts, the journalist has to give the reader a real feeling of the events and people involved. One technique for achieving this is to treat the protagonists like characters in a novel. What is their motivation? What are they thinking?

**Status details.** Just as important as the characters and the events, are the surroundings, specifically what people surround themselves with. Wolfe describes these items as the tools for a "social autopsy", so we can see people as they see themselves.

# **Mark Kramer, “Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists”**

- 1. Literary journalists immerse themselves in subjects’ worlds and in background research.**
- 2. Literary journalists work out implicit covenants about accuracy and candor with readers and with sources.**
  - (a) The writer’s relationship to readers***
  - (b) The writer’s relationships to sources***
- 3. Literary journalists write mostly about routine events.**
- 4. Literary journalists write in “intimate voice,” informal, frank, human and ironic.**
- 5. Style counts, and tends to be plain and spare.**
- 6. Literary journalists write from a disengaged and mobile stance, from which they tell stories and also turn and address readers directly.**
- 7. Structure counts, mixing primary narrative with tales and digressions to amplify and reframe events.**
- 8. Literary journalists develop meaning by building upon the readers’ sequential reactions.**

## **Katherine Boo, “15 rules for narrative nonfiction”**

- 1. It's not enough to tell the stories of victims. I also need to investigate perps.**
- 2. I let what I hate give me wing.**
- 3. I'm not the sum of my best or most difficult circumstances, and neither are the people I report on.**
- 4. When I'm first settling into a place, I tell myself that strong presumptions will make me miss what's happening.**
- 5. Memory sucks.**
- 6. I ask myself: “What would really get lost if this story never ran?”**
- 7. Don't be a whiner.**
- 8. I don't try to find simple characters.**

## **Katherine Boo, “15 rules for narrative nonfiction”**

- 9. I try never to forget that my “subjects” are really my co-investigators.**
- 10. Though I seek out the public record maniacally, I don’t assume that it’s accurate.**
- 11. To calibrate my compass as a writer, I share my work widely and not only with journalists.**
- 12. I often tell myself that editors and publishers don’t know what’s going to sell.**
- 13. Even if I’m telling urgent stories, I can still experiment with form and make it a creative process.**
- 14. When after a lot of effort I can’t pin something down, I force myself to put that uncertainty on the page.**
- 15. If my work is successful, I don’t go and get high on my own supply.**

**Bonus rule: Mind the gap.**

# **Group Work I**

## **Criteria to be Considered Literary Journalism**

**Choose five, *and only five*, of the following criteria and rank them in order from 1–5, with 1 being the most important.**

# **Literary / Journalism**

**Literary journalism vs.  
journalistic literature**

**What is the noun or  
adjective implying  
actually?**

# **Literary / Journalism**

**Define the characteristics of journalism.**

# **Literary / Journalism**

**Define the characteristics of journalism.**

**What makes literary journalism different from traditional journalism?**

# **Literary / Journalism**

**Define the characteristics of literature.**

**What makes literary journalism different from traditional journalism?**

# **Literary / Journalism**

**Define the characteristics of literature.**

**What makes literary journalism different from traditional literature?**

## **Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“It all depends on what you call literature. If it means telling stories, then certainly I did. I have always loved telling stories, and I have always tried to do it well. Now a genuine journalistic literature also exists. There are two very different attitudes – the writer’s, and the journalist’s – which you cannot tell apart by the quality of the writing, although they can be distinguished by a different grammar, vocabulary, or syntax. A journalist is a *go-between*, a mediator between the readers and the event. So he must ask himself the questions that the readers ask when faced with that event. A writer answers his own questions. A writer only thinks of his book. He does not think of his readers. So they have different attitudes. During the first twenty-five years of my career, I did not want to address my own questions. I was happy to be a journalist. It is an extraordinary job. There is a true ethic in journalism. There are rules that writers do not need to comply with. It is a different attitude. Storytelling comes more naturally to the Americans: the story is always the driving force. If you follow Hillary Clinton’s presidential election campaign, stories come up every day. Politics is made of stories. For us, it is not so natural. The French press has always been defined as ideological, political; points of view should not be radicalized, but still, there is some truism in this.”**

## **Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“There is an exchange between the journalist and the reader; there is a transmitter and there is a receiver. The transmitter is always criticized – often rightly so – but no one ever questions the receiver. Sometimes, with particular events, the receiver is not working, and it is difficult to know why. When I covered the war in Bosnia, I started writing on 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> April 1992, and continued until the end of June, without there being any interest from the readers. Then the Americans began to show interest. It is difficult to know why things suddenly change. I did write about ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. You can find it in the records at *Libération*. I wrote about it in April, May, but nobody cared. Then all of a sudden there was some uproar and everyone wanted to hear that story. It is difficult to say why the receiver did not accept the message in the first place, and then did, almost overnight. What I mean is that transmitter and receiver are interconnected; they cannot work independently. That relationship between journalist and reader is very different from the relationship between writer and reader. A writer may be disappointed if he is not read, but that won't impact his writing.”**

**Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“The main difference between a writer and a journalist is the so-called *mise-en-scène*: how you present the facts. Writers can present a reality in a way that is not possible for journalists. In my own situation, there may have been a kind of complementarity. Some stories are terribly difficult to tell because time flies. Let me give you an example. At war, we get bored. The most important moment of the war is boredom, waiting. And that is impossible to tell in a newspaper. So we don’t talk about it. The readers want to know about actions – decisive moments, massacres – therefore the journalist will instinctively take an interest in those highly tense moments, to the detriment of slower and less relevant moments, which are nevertheless constitutive of the event.”**

**Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“The writer – and that’s what I tried to do – will use the notes that are left aside. We meet a lot of people that never or hardly appear in our reportages; we listen a lot but use little material because we must work fast. As journalists, we leave lots of people by the wayside; as writers, you can come back and spend time with them, not just out of duty, but because they are truly important in the war. Their role was underestimated and they never had due recognition. And yet they are interesting characters. As a writer, you can come back to these moments of silence, boredom, cheerfulness... it is difficult, in a war, to tell stories of intense love, which explain the nostalgia, because people and relations are different. Everything is upside down, and this disruption is a difficult story to tell. So you may be tempted to get back to this and to recreate characters that you actually met. So you recreate a reality.”**

**Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“In *The Antelope’s Strategy*, I explain how a population of 5,000 was decimated at Nyamata, and only twenty survived. They don’t see each other. When they see each other, they dare not talk. When people survive a war and go through that kind of experience, they stick together, celebrate. Here they avoid each other because they are incapable of telling that story together. So here I come and invite them to tell their stories. It is possible. “How was life then?” “How was it in the mornings?” Innocent explains that he imagined he was a monkey, living in trees, licking leaves to quench his thirst; he is ashamed. So I offer them an opportunity to tell their stories. Marie-Louise told her story in one day; for Francine, on the other hand, it was a very long process. She wanted to say something, but did not dare to say it. You could guess she had been raped.”**

**Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“Everything that is written in the book was said. But not as it is written as I did major editing and pruning. First I connect elements that were said at different times. Then I delete a lot to avoid boredom, repetition, weariness, triteness. A literary tension must be maintained throughout. With the killers, I did not respect the monologues but worked with themes. I hacked their monologues into pieces, interspersed them with texts that provide context and explain how I got access to them. It is a lot of work, of editing.”**

**Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“Alphonse said at some point this incredible sentence: “we were less embarrassed to use our machetes than to face the scoffing and scolding of our comrades.” He said something extremely important about social conformity. They killed just to be with their folks. They did not see it would end in disaster. I allow them to say those terrible sentences. At some point they told me that if they did not kill, they would be punished. I was reading Christopher Browning at the time, who explains that Nazi officers always had the choice to kill or not to kill. Nobody obliged them to kill. But if they did not, they were punished. Latrine duties, potato peeling, washing, etc. No big deal. Nobody was sentenced to imprisonment in Germany for refusing to kill a Jew. When I asked one of the killers in Rwanda to tell me what the punishment was, he replied, ‘a crate of beer.’”**

**Jean Hatzfeld, French Literary Journalist (recent interview)**

**“*La Ligne de flottaison* is about the addiction to war journalism. It is possible, for intellectual, sensual, psychological reasons, to be addicted to war. As a journalist, you become addicted because there are so many – love, war – stories to tell. If fear is no obstacle, then it is pure exhilaration. So here we have a piece of journalistic literature, created from reality, without fictive characters, but it can be novelistic in style. Telling the story of the siege in Sarajevo or Beirut is addictive. Very addictive.**

**In *L’Air de la guerre* I wanted to tell the story of characters that had gone by so quickly in my reportages, but also to tell the story of the journalist’s position: where is he when he tells his story; what does he see when he moves about with his interpreters; how does he feel the fear, or the absence thereof; what does it mean to be on the frontline?”**

# **Conclusions**

## **Literary / Journalism**

**In terms of literary journalism, we are more concerned about the journalism than about the literature.**

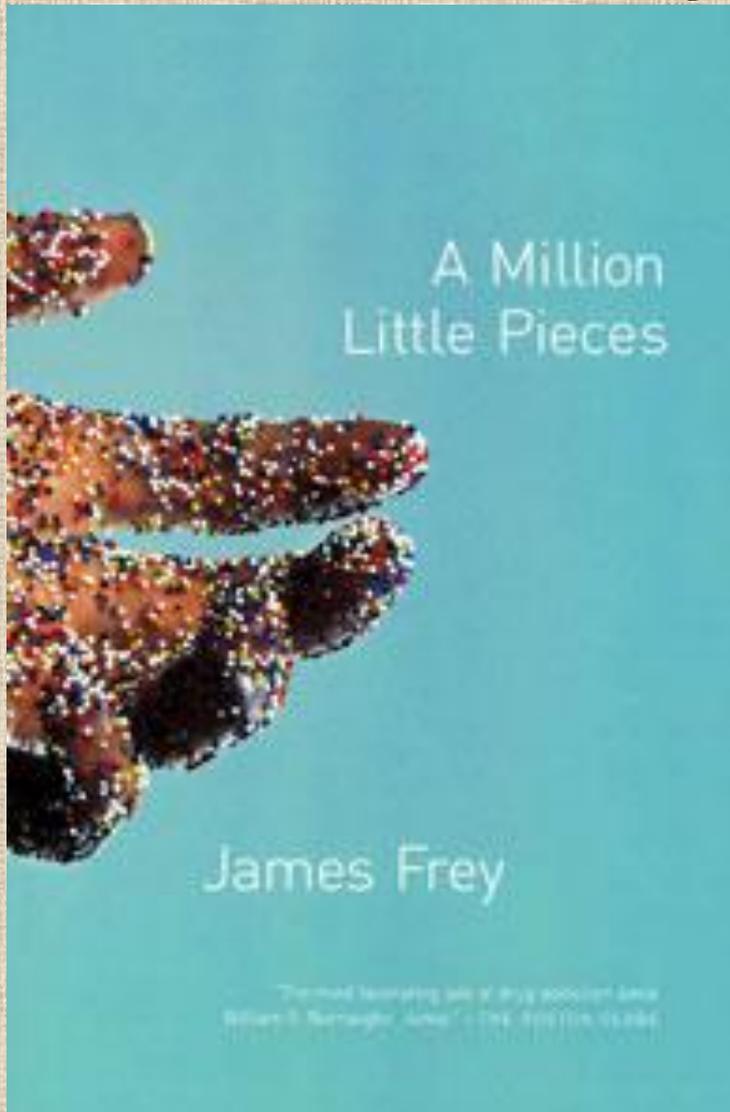
**But is that because you are journalism students?**

# **Literary / Journalism**

**In terms of literary journalism, we are more concerned about the journalism than about the literature.**

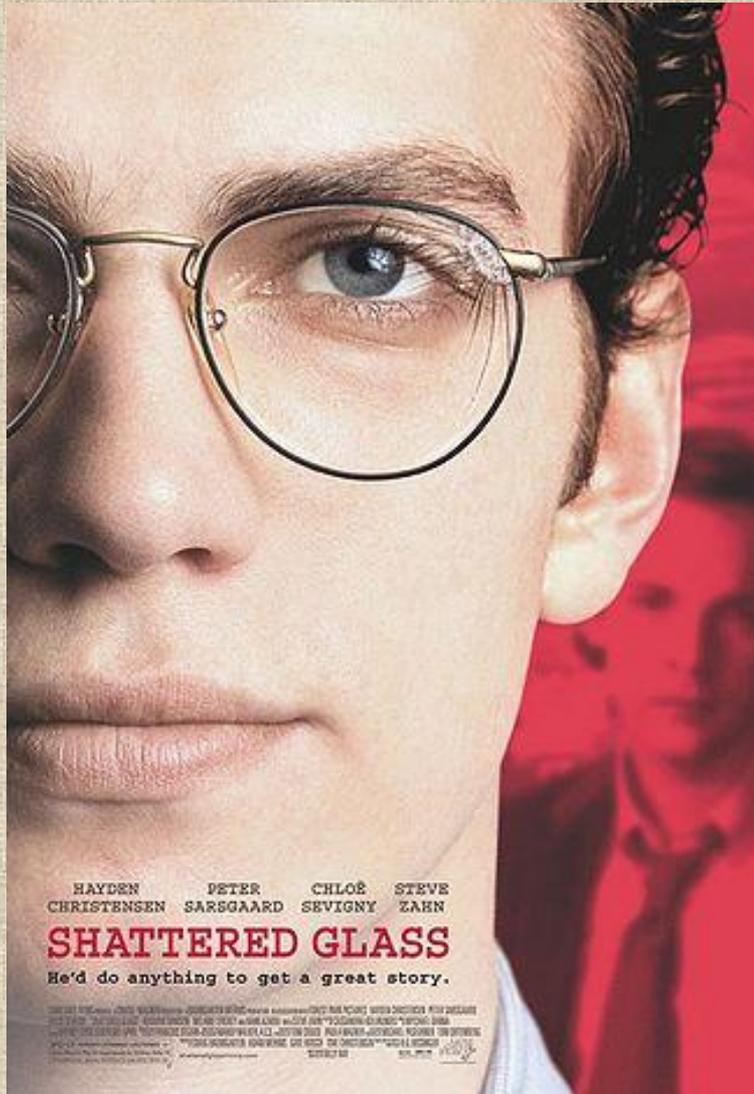
**The “literary” aspect is only seen in “degrees” of literariness.**

# Literary / Journalism



**The case of  
James Frey's  
*A Million  
Little Pieces*  
(2003)**

# Literary / Journalism



**The case of  
Stephen Glass  
in the  
*New Republic*  
(1998)**

# **Literary Journalism**

**In 1999, New York University's Department of Journalism ranked the top 100 books of journalism for the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

**The top ten are:**

**John Hersey.** "Hiroshima." 1946

**Rachel Carson.** "Silent Spring." 1962

**Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.** Watergate investigations for the *Washington Post*. 1972-73

**Edward R. Murrow.** "This is London . . ." radio reports for CBS on the German bombing of London. Also collected in book form. 1940

**Ida Tarbell.** "The History of the Standard Oil Company" investigation. 1902-1904 (book 1904)

**Lincoln Steffens.** "The Shame of the Cities." 1902-1904 (book 1904)

**John Reed.** "Ten Days That Shook the World." 1919

**H.L. Mencken.** Coverage of the Scopes "monkey" trial. 1925

**Ernie Pyle.** Reports from Europe and the Pacific during World War II. 1940-45

**Edward R. Murrow and Fred Friendly.** *See It Now* documentary taking on Senator Joseph McCarthy. 1954

# **Group Work II**

**Break up again into your groups and, given all that we have talked about and debated today, come up with your “Top Ten” books of literary journalism (one list just for the U.S. and then a second list for the World).**

**Be ready to justify your lists and their order.**