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# The Ethics of Literary Journalism. about War and Social Conflict

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# **The Ethics of Literary Journalism about War and Social Conflict**

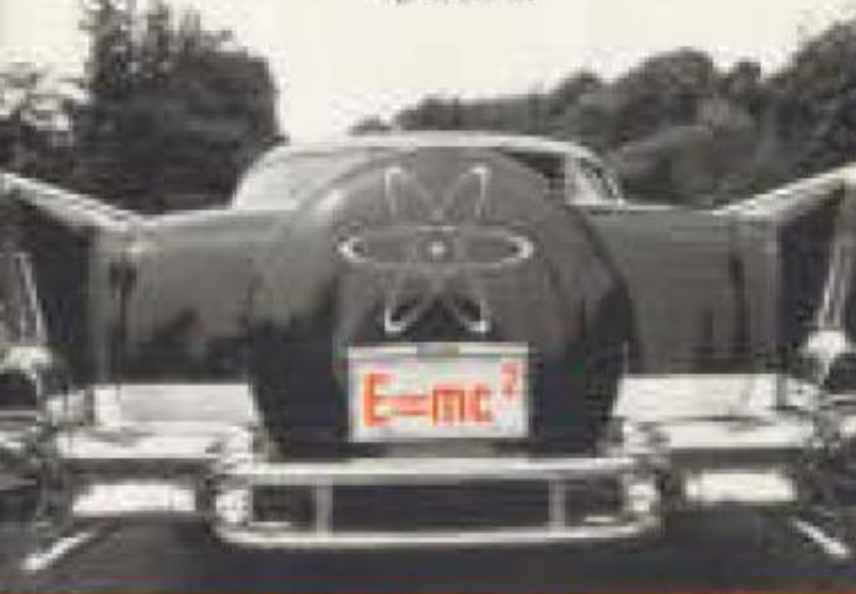
## **Perspectives from Writers, Readers and Policy Makers**

**11 November 2021  
Universidad Iberoamericana**

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

# DRIVING Mr. Albert

A TRIP ACROSS AMERICA  
WITH EINSTEIN'S  
BRAIN



MICHAEL PATERNITI



**It has taken me more than a year to find Harvey, and during that time I've had a dim, inchoate feeling—one that has increased in luminosity—that if I could somehow reach him and Einstein's brain, I might unravel their strange relationship, one that arcs across this century and America itself. And now, before the future arrives and the supercomputers of the world fritz out and we move to lunar colonies—before all that hullabaloo—Harvey and I are finally sitting here together.**

**That day Harvey tells me the story he's told before—to friends and family and pilgrims—one that has made him an odd celebrity even in this age of odd celebrity. He tells it deliberately, assuming that I will be impressed by it as a testament to the rightness of his actions rather than as a cogent defense of them.**

**A confession: I want Harvey to sleep. I want him to fall into a deep, blurry, Rip Van Winkle daze, and I want to park the Skylark mother-ship and walk around to the trunk and open it. I want Harvey snoring loudly as I unzip the duffel bag and reach my hands inside, and I want to — what? — touch Einstein's brain. I want to touch the brain. Yes, I've admitted it. I want to hold it, cuddle it, measure its weight in my palm, handle some of its fifteen billion now-dormant neurons. Does it feel like tofu, sea urchin, bologna? What, exactly? And what does such a desire make me? One of the relic freaks? Or something worse?**

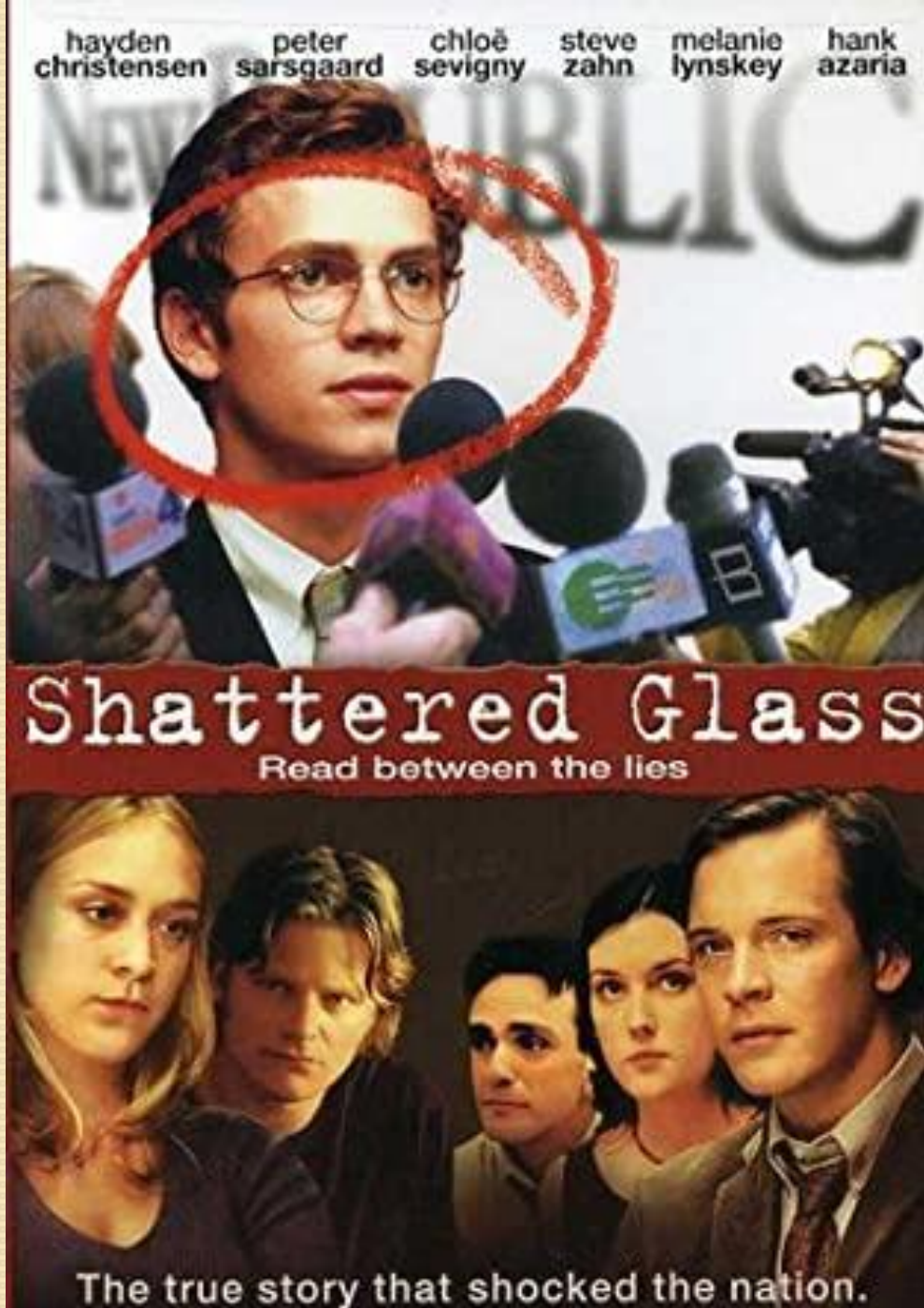
**It's been a long day, and yet the brain has got me pumped up. I try to make a phone call, but the phone is broken. I try to write some postcards, but my pen explodes. By some trick of the room's mirror, it seems that there are lights levitating everywhere. Finally, not quite knowing what to do, I go to bed. I put Einstein's brain on one pillow and rest my own head on the other one next to it, fewer than four inches away. Just to see. I've come 4,000 miles for this moment, and now all I do is fall asleep. Light from the road slips over the room—a greenish, underwater glow—and the traffic noise dims. ...**

**Is it possible that in our dreams we enter a different dimension of the universe. On this night, it's possible that I suddenly have three wives and ten kids and twelve grandchildren, that I've become Harvey himself, that I open up bodies to find more bodies and open those bodies to find that I'm falling through space and time.**

....

**When I step outside into the bright early-morning sun of California, I have the top off the Tupperware. And although later I will return the brain to Harvey, I am for a brief moment the man with the plan, the keeper of the cosmos. Do I feel the thing that all totems and fetishes make people feel? Something that I can believe in? A power larger than myself that I can submit to? Salvation? Have I touched eternity?**

**But I am here now. In the now now. Day has come back up from the other side of the earth, the birds have come down from the sky. There are flashes of orange light, the air is flooded with honeysuckle. I feel something I can't quite put my finger on, something euphoric but deeply unsayable. Is it love or just not hate? Is it joy or just not sadness? For a moment, all of time seems to flow through the Flamingo, its bright edges reflecting the past and the present, travelers packing their bags and riveting into some farther future. We are always driving with our secrets in the trunk, amazed by the cows and rainbows and palm trees. And do I dare to think that there will be no ending of the world, of America, of ourselves? I do. I really do. For in some recurrence, in some light wave, in some shimmer of time, we are out there now, and forever, existing, even as surely as Einstein himself continues to exist, here in my hands. ■**



*Shattered Glass* is a 2003 biographical drama film about journalist Stephen Glass and his scandal at *The New Republic*.

# The Ethics of Literary Journalism

1. What are the risks involved in getting a story?
2. What are the boundaries separating fact from fiction?
3. What is an author's responsibility to a story after it is published?
4. What is a reader's or a policy-maker's responsibility after the story is published?

# Definitions of Literary Journalism

**It is journalism, first and foremost, informed by knowable and verifiable facts and framed within a literary dynamic unique to that country's aesthetics. It is a journalism, however, that is shaped more by inductive than deductive reasoning, obtained not by trusting in other people's singular response to a question, but in searching, often through exhaustive trial and error, for multiple interpretations of a particular fact. Again, this is the idealistic goal of *all* journalism, but I don't want yet to emphasize the literary aspects because literature is different from one country to another. Certain cultures favor literary realism, others magical realism. You have to give each nation the breadth of introducing its own brand of literary quality into the journalistic piece. World literature is obviously *not* like American literature, and we should not expect it to be. But the goal of all journalism to get as close to the truth of a story as possible.**

# Definitions of Literary Journalism

The art and craft of reportage—journalism marked by vivid description, a novelist’s eye to form, and eyewitness reporting that reveals hidden truths about people and events that have shaped the world we know.

— *Granta*

Reportage Literature is an engagement with reality with a novelist’s eye but with a journalist’s discipline.

— Pedro Rosa Mendes, Portugal

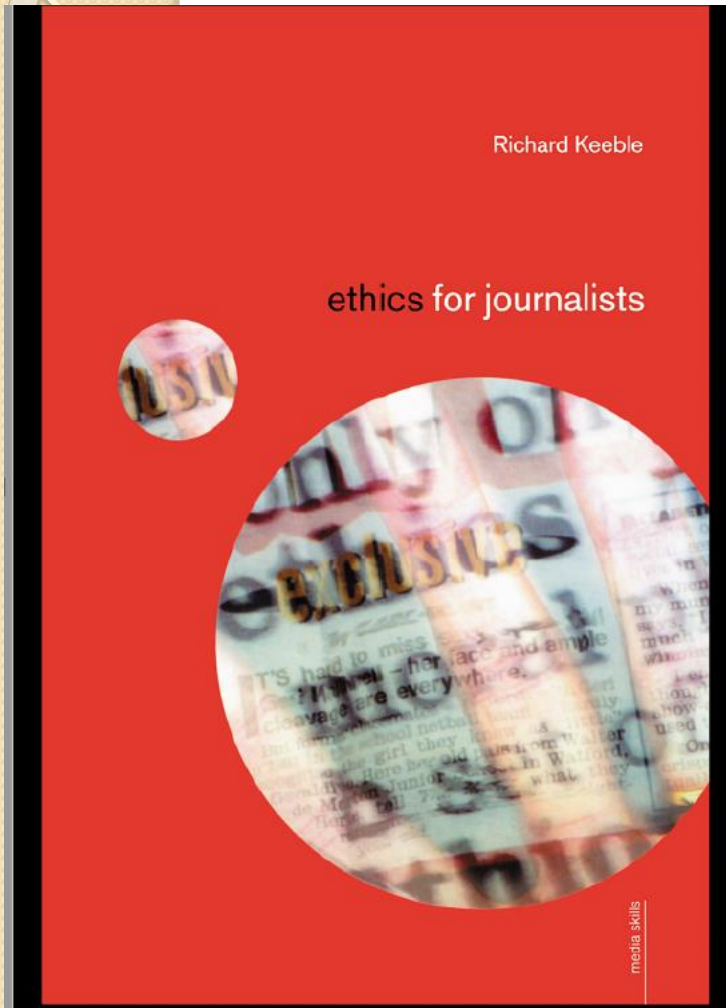
A good reportage must not necessarily be linked with topical or political events which are taking place around us. I think the miracle of things lies not in showing the extraordinary but in showing ordinary things in which the extraordinary is hidden.

— Nirmal Verma, India

Journalism that would read like a novel . . . or short story.

— Tom Wolfe, United States

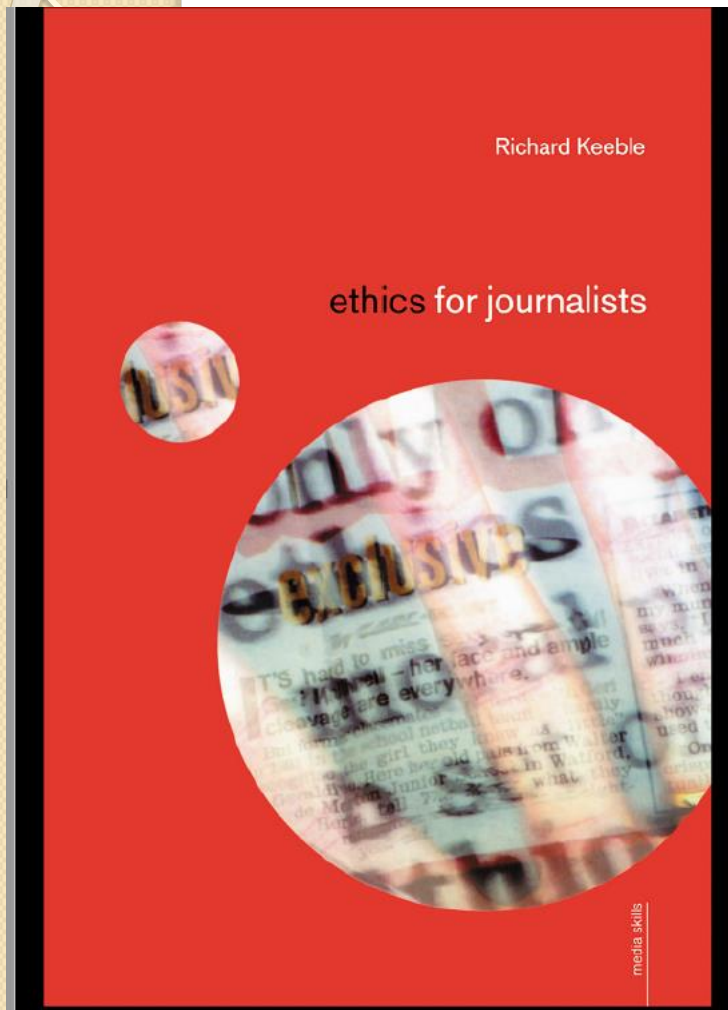
# The Ethics of Literary Journalism



**Richard Keeble's *Ethics for Journalism* defines several ethical issues facing journalists today, issues complicated by the rise of social media and the central importance of the internet in diffusing information.**

**His premise is this: Journalism is a business before it is a service to democracies; therefore, as business models changes, so do the ethics behind them.**

# The Ethics of Literary Journalism



**But Journalism is not Literary Journalism (LJ), which is less about making money (at least for now) and more about informing democracies about the world around them.**

**Journalism wants to accurately report the news. LJ wants to institute change in the news reported.**

**As such, the ethics of LJ are different from the ethics of news Journalism. Why?**

**Because the writer gets closer to his or her topic, and to the people involved, and therefore puts them all more at risk than a news story does. And when we talk about war, it gets even more complicated.**

# The Ethics of Literary Journalism

Surveys of public opinion place journalists at the bottom of 15 groups in terms of public credibility – even below politicians. Phil Hall (2000), former editor of the *News of the World*, comments: ‘One of the most frustrating parts of working on the *NoW* was the lack of trust the public has in journalists.’ The British Social Attitudes survey revealed that only 15 per cent of readers trust national newspaper journalists to pursue the truth above getting a good story. According to Postman (1985: 4), entertainment has become the supra-ideology; the natural format for the representation of all experience. ‘Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice. The result is that we are a people amusing ourselves to death.’ Franklin (1997) bewails the spread of trashy ‘newzak’. And Ian Jack (1999) condemns the media’s ‘fickle, orgasmic sensationalism. Every branch is infected’.

# The Ethics of Literary Journalism

Ethics implies freedom to choose. But journalists are constrained by so many factors – proprietors, fear, the law, time and space to name but a few. There is much talk about the freedom of the press but the freedom of the individual journalist (particularly of the young trainee) in any media operation is restricted by vested interests, routinised working practices and hierarchical, bureaucratic, organisational structures.

# The Ethics of Literary Journalism

## WHY BOTHER WITH ETHICAL CODES?

Ethical codes provoke a range of responses from journalists (see Nordenstreng 1997). Some regard them as vehicles of professionalisation, as a means of professional education, as instruments of consciousness-raising and as deliberate attempts by journalists to regulate the media and ward off legislation restricting their activities. Significantly, the first codes emerged in the first decade of the last century in Poland and the United States as part of the more general moves towards professionalisation. In Europe such codes were adopted gradually – after World War One (in Sweden, France and the UK), immediately after World War Two (Italy, Belgium) and around the late 1960s and 1970s (Spain, Portugal).

# The Ethics of Literary Journalism

## WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL UNDERLYING VALUES YOU CAN IDENTIFY IN THE CODES?

Some values are evident in codes throughout the world (Grevisse 1999; Laitila 1993):

- fairness;
- the separation of fact and opinion;
- the need for accuracy linked with the responsibility to correct errors; the deliberate distortion and suppression of information are condemned;
- maintaining confidentiality of sources;
- upholding journalists' responsibility to guard citizens' right to freedom of expression;
- recognising a duty to defend the dignity and independence of the profession;
- protecting people's right to privacy;
- respecting and seeking after truth;
- struggling against censorship;
- avoiding discrimination on grounds of race, sexual orientation, gender, language, religion or political opinions;
- avoiding conflicts of interests (particularly with respect to political and financial journalists/editors holding shares in companies they report on).

# 1. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

1. Risks to the author of the story.
2. Risks to the people interviewed in the story.
3. Risks to the nations involved in the story.

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## **Risks to the author of the story.**

**The author consciously puts him- or herself in harm's way just to get the story. But, ethically speaking, are the reasons for that risk justifiable?**

**In other words, is the story important enough for a writer to potentially die in trying to report it? By important enough, I mean a story that is not “sensational” for the sake in making the author a hero but necessary in revealing a truth to the greater good.**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## Examples: *Black Like Me*



“I wet my sponge, poured dye on it, and touched up the corners of my mouth and lips, which were always difficult spots.”

- *Black Like Me*, page 119

This photograph of Griffin applying the “dye” to his face is here published for the first time. This and other historic photographs included in this edition of *Black Like Me* were taken by Don Rutledge in 1959 in New Orleans.

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## **Examples: *Black Like Me***

When not lying under the lamp, I walked the streets of New Orleans to orient myself. Each day I stopped at a sidewalk shoe-shine stand near the French Market. The shine boy was an elderly man, large, keenly intelligent and a good talker. He had lost a leg during World War I. He showed none of the obsequiousness of the Southern Negro, but was polite and easy to know. (Not that I had any illusions that I knew him, for he was too astute to allow any white man that privilege.) I told him I was a writer, touring the Deep South to study living conditions, civil rights, etc., but I did not tell him I would do this as a Negro. Finally, we exchanged names. He was called Sterling Williams. I decided he might be the contact for my entry into the Negro community.

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## **Examples: *Black Like Me***

In the afternoon, my host looked at me with friendly alarm. “I don’t know what you’re up to,” he said, “but I’m worried.”

I told him not to be and suggested I would probably leave sometime that night. He said he had a meeting, but would cancel it. I asked him not to. “I don’t want you here when I go,” I said.

“What are you going to do - be a Puerto Rican or something?” he asked.

“Something like that,” I said. “There may be ramifications. I’d rather you didn’t know anything about it. I don’t want you involved.”

He left around five. I fixed myself a bite of supper and drank many cups of coffee, putting off the moment when I would shave my head, grind in the stain and walk out into the New Orleans night as a Negro.

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## **Examples: *Black Like Me***

Turning off all the lights, I went into the bathroom and closed the door. I stood in the darkness before the mirror, my hand on the light switch. I forced myself to flick it on.

In the flood of light against white tile, the face and shoulders of a stranger - a fierce, bald, very dark Negro - glared at me from the glass. He in no way resembled me.

The transformation was total and shocking. I had expected to see myself disguised, but this was something else. I was imprisoned in the flesh of an utter stranger, an unsympathetic one with whom I felt no kinship. All traces of the John Griffin I had been were wiped from existence. Even the senses underwent a change so profound it filled me

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## **Examples: *Black Like Me***

with distress. I looked into the mirror and saw nothing of the white John Griffin's past. No, the reflections led back to Africa, back to the shanty and the ghetto, back to the fruitless struggles against the mark of blackness. Suddenly, almost with no mental preparation, no advance hint, it became clear and permeated my whole being. My inclination was to fight against it. I had gone too far. I knew now that there is no such thing as a disguised white man, when the black won't rub off. The black man is wholly a Negro, regardless of what he once may have been. I was a newly created Negro who must go out that door and live in a world unfamiliar to me.



*Griffin under the sunlamp:* Ultraviolet radiation accelerated the darkening process, initiated by Oxsoralen, the drug used to treat vitiligo (a condition that causes white splotches on the skin).



*Below:* As described in the text, Griffin was warned against looking at white women - including movie posters (p. 60).



On April 2, 1960, Griffin was informed that he had been “hanged in effigy” on Main Street in Mansfield, Texas. Griffin’s name and a yellow streak were painted on the dummy’s back. Taken to the town dump by the local constable, by the time a *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* photographer took this picture, someone had placed the dummy in front of this sign (pp. 159-160). Griffin later quipped that it was “not a very good likeness.”

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## Examples: *Black Like Me*

“You were hanged in effigy from the center red-light wire downtown on Main Street this morning.”

“In Mansfield,” I asked.

“That’s right.” He told me that the *Star-Telegram* had received an anonymous call that racists had hanged my effigy on Main Street. The newspaper checked it out with the local constable who confirmed that a dummy, half black, half white, with my name on it and a yellow streak painted down its back, was hanging from the wire.

“What would you like to say about it?” the reporter asked.

“I’m sorry it happened,” I said. “It’ll only give the town a worse name.”

“People seem pretty excited about what you’ve done. There’s a lot of loose talk out in Mansfield. Do you think this represents a real threat?”

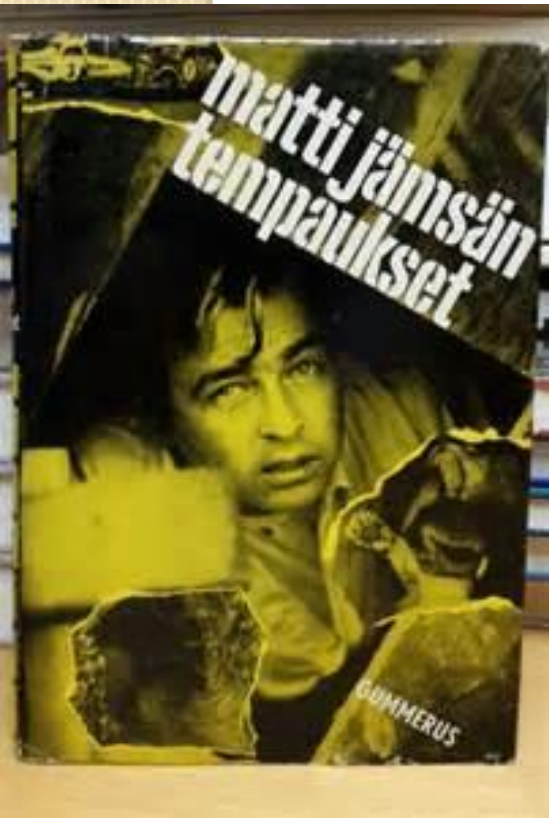
“I’d probably be the last to know,” I said.

“Do you think your life’s in danger?”

“I have no idea.”

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## Examples: Matti Jämsä



**“Laskuvarjohyppy neljasta kilometristä mereen”**

**(A Parachute Jump into the Sea from Four Kilometers Up)**

# **I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?**

**Jämsä became notorious for his daredevil stunts, which began when he tested the alertness of the salespeople in a department store by stealing a carpet and a bicycle, among other things. Jämsä and two female reporters, who went by the nicknames Jami and Ippa, developed ever more action packed story ideas. Jami and Ippa were mostly used as frightened background characters who added excitement to the story.**

**Matti was sitting next to the door in his heavy, uncomfortable equipment, his face glistening with grease. He didn't look nervous, not really even excited, but he was severe. I tried to smile encouragingly. I don't know if I succeeded, but I did get a smile in return. "I'm not afraid, not at all," Matti said, as if he was surprising himself, "but this all feels so unreal."**

# **I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?**

**And the sun is going down, down. Why won't he jump already? We're scared.**

**—Matti dear, jump already. Soon we won't be able to see the plane, not to mention you as you jump. . . .**

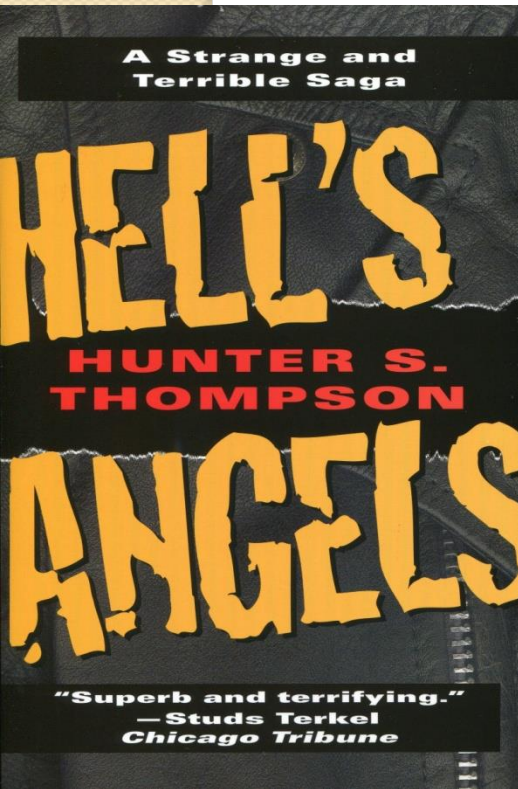
**And in a fraction of a second it hits me that it's our Matti who's falling there now. The insane Matti who wouldn't listen to us in time. My heart convulses with fear. (*Mjt* 59, 63)**

**Matti Jämsä continued writing less dangerous reportages as well, but stunts that risked his health and even his life became his trademark, and such stories were what readers expected of him. He boosted his heroic reputation by reminiscing about his earlier adventures and giving detailed information about the planning and the background of upcoming ones.**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Examples: Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels***

**LEO E. LITWAK, *New York Times***



Thompson entered this terra incognita to become its cartographer. For almost a year, he accompanied the Hell's Angels on their rallies. He drank at their bars, exchanged home visits, recorded their brutalities, viewed their sexual caprices, became converted to their motorcycle mystique, and was so intrigued, as he puts it, that "I was no longer sure whether I was doing research on the Hell's Angels or being slowly absorbed by them."


During his last interview with a group of Angels, he is suddenly struck from behind. He is knocked down and stomped. He is almost done in by a "vicious swine trying to get at me with the stone held in a two-handed Godzilla grip." He gets to a hospital unaided.

**Consider Ted Conover and his roll in *Riding Nowhere* where he deceives the people he meets, but not the same in *Coyote* where they know he is a reporter. But *Newjack* is more problematic and Ted is open with the reader at the beginning, building that confidence with the reader, saying he tried to be a reporter but could not and in the end had to take on a job there and deceive the other guards and the inmates.**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Risks to the people interviewed in the story.**

**Examples: Wolfgang Bauer's *Über das Meer***

The image shows the cover of the book 'Über das Meer' by Wolfgang Bauer. The cover features a dark, atmospheric photograph of a boat on the sea at night or dusk. The text on the cover is white and includes the title 'Über das Meer', the subtitle 'Mit Syrern auf der Flucht nach Europa', the genre 'Eine Reportage', the author's name 'Wolfgang Bauer', and the publisher 'edition suhrkamp'. The SV logo is also visible at the bottom.

## Über das Meer

Mit Syrern auf der  
Flucht nach Europa

Eine Reportage

Wolfgang Bauer

edition suhrkamp

SV

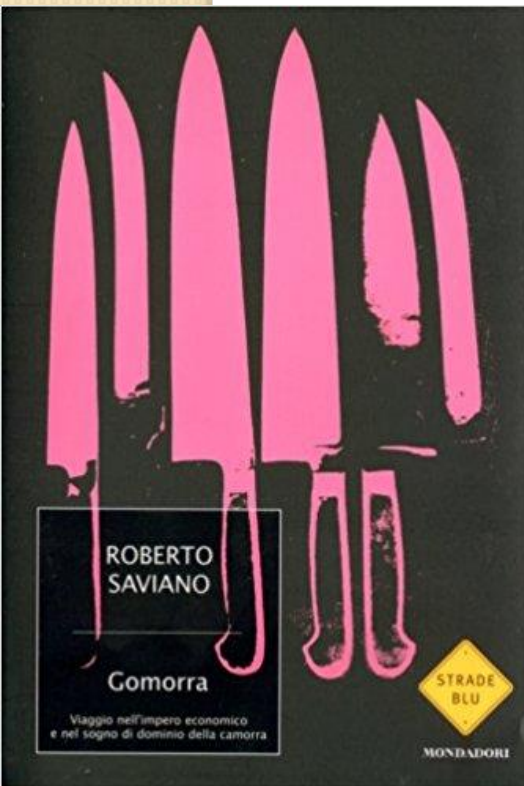
In July 2014 Wolfgang Bauer and photographer Stanislav Krupar accompanied Syrian refugees from their hiding spots in Egypt on a refugee boat to Europe. The journalists grew beards and acquired new identities. The traffickers could not know who they really were. The transit failed; they were arrested by Egyptian police on Nelson Island — and deported as Europeans. Some of the other refugees later made the crossing.

This is how a journalist who writes about human traffickers suddenly became a human trafficker himself. The two brothers they help get caught in Austria.

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Risks to the people interviewed in the story.**

**Examples: Roberto Saviano's *Gomorra***



**One of the most famous examples of a New Italian Epic text is Saviano's *Gomorra* (*Gomorrhah*), a 2006 exposé of the Neapolitan mafia known as the Camorra.**

**In researching for the book (which is part of the Unidentified Narrative Objects movement of the Wu Ming circle of Italian authors), Saviano had to interview numerous people, all of whom understood that turning evidence against the Camorra would be met with a swift and immediate death.**

**Saviano had to weigh this risk against the revelation of the mafia's crimes.**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## **Risk to the nations involved in the story.**

**Example: Martin Bell, “Journalism of Attachment,” in *Media Ethics*, ed. Matthew Kieran (London: Routledge, 1998), 15-22.**

**At the time of the war in ex-Yugoslavia, Martin Bell, a former BBC journalist, coined the term “journalism of attachment” to describe a situation in which the reporter had a moral obligation to “record the human and emotional costs of war,” demand intervention, and not simply transfer information.**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## **Risk to the nations involved in the story.**

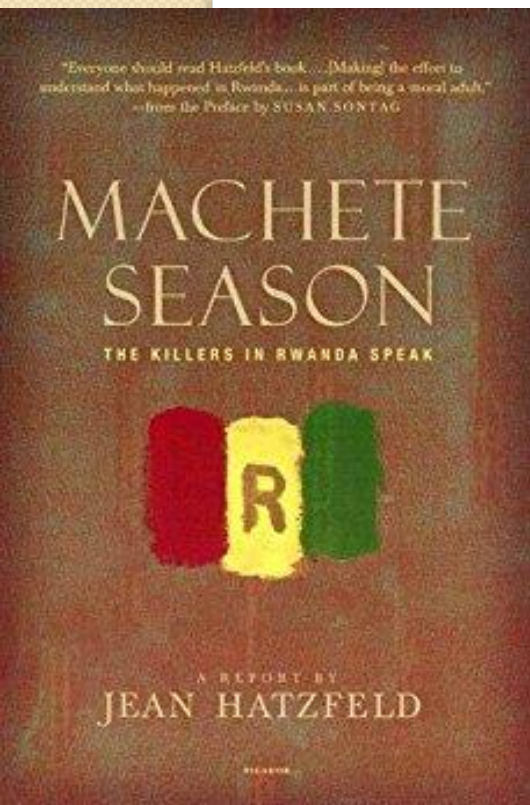
**Example: Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season* (2003/2006)**

**On April 6, 1994, the plane transporting the then president of Rwanda, Juvénal Habyarimana, exploded above Kigali. The Hutus had been calling for the killing of Tutsis for quite a while, but the president's assassination was the triggering factor for the genocide, whose magnitude and speed had never been seen before. 800,000 Tutsis were slaughtered in three months. In the region of Bugesera, near Nyamata, where Hatzfeld initiated his literary project, 50,000 out of 59,000 Tutsis were massacred, from April 11 until May 14. The *Interahamwe*, a paramilitary organization, chased the Tutsis who were hiding in the marshes, desperately trying to avoid Hutu machetes.**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Risk to the nations involved in the story.**

**Example: Jean Hatzfeld**

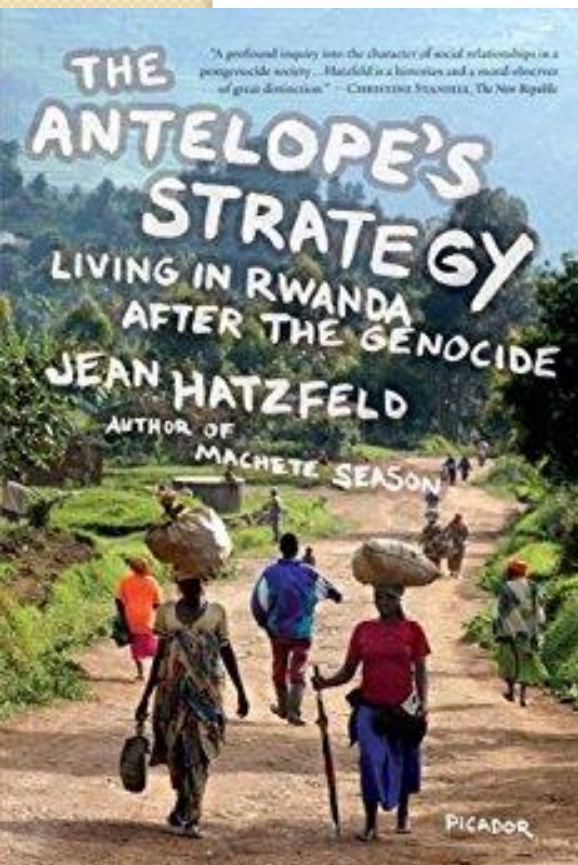


Hatzfeld decided to write on the Rwandan genocide due to a journalistic failure. All reportages at the time presented a glaring omission: the survivors were missing. That was the author's cue to go and look for their stories. His determination to spend time with the survivors, but also with the killers, and later with their children, resulted in a number of stories: *Life Laid Bare: The Survivors in Rwanda Speak* (2000; US version 2007); *Machete Season: The Survivors in Rwanda Speak* (2003; US version 2006); and *The Antelope's Strategy: Living in Rwanda after the Genocide* (2007; US version 2010). The next two volumes, *Englebert des collines* (2014) and *Un papa de sang* (2015), will be available in English soon.

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Risk to the nations involved in the story.**

**Example: Jean Hatzfeld**

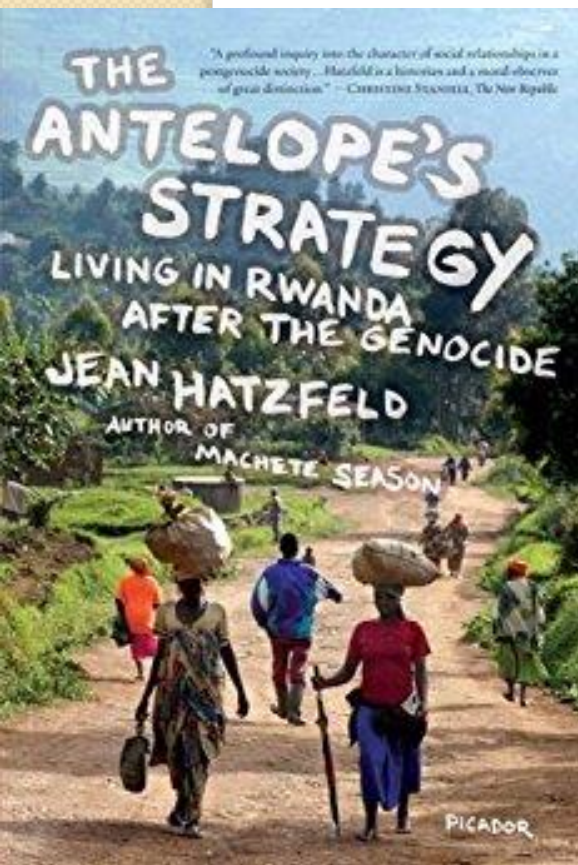


**Stunned by the poetry of the survivors' language, Hatzfeld does not tire of exploring its sense of possibilities. Walking a tightrope between real facts and creative writing, the author has opened new avenues of expression to tell stories of survival. All books on Rwanda have been translated by Linda Coverdale. *Machete Season* is prefaced by Susan Sontag.**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Risk to the nations involved in the story.**

**Example: Jean Hatzfeld**

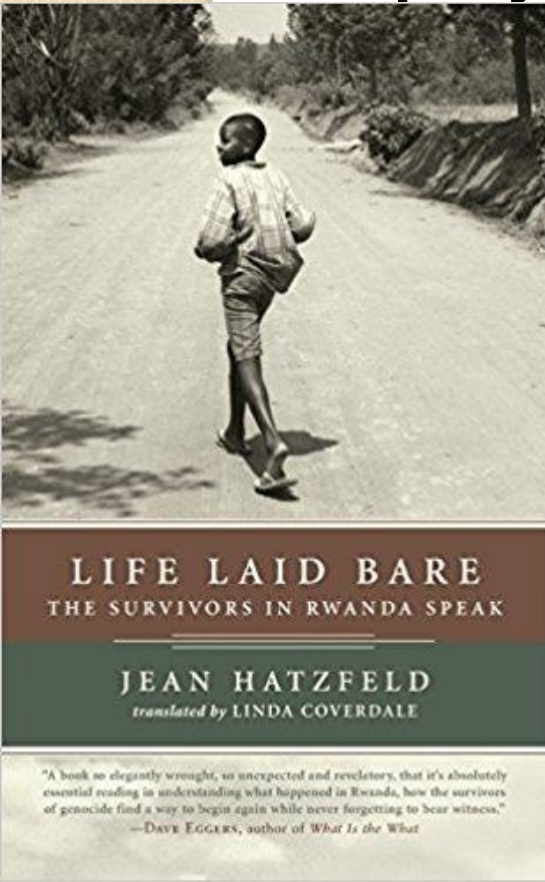


**“War is a river that overflows. Genocide is a river drying up. In genocide there are no humane relationships as in wars, where there is love, friendship, solidarity. It’s all gone. That’s when I stopped journalism. Journalism fell short. ... When I arrived in Rwanda, I described what I saw. Distraught, starving people fleeing to Congo, the Rwandan Patriotic Front’s progress, the blue helmets, corpses, fallow lands ... and I think that I’m doing a good job. In September I came back, and I was in shock. We, the journalists, had written about all the characters in the genocide, except the survivors. We had forgotten the survivors.”**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Risk to the nations involved in the story.**

**Example: Jean Hatzfeld**

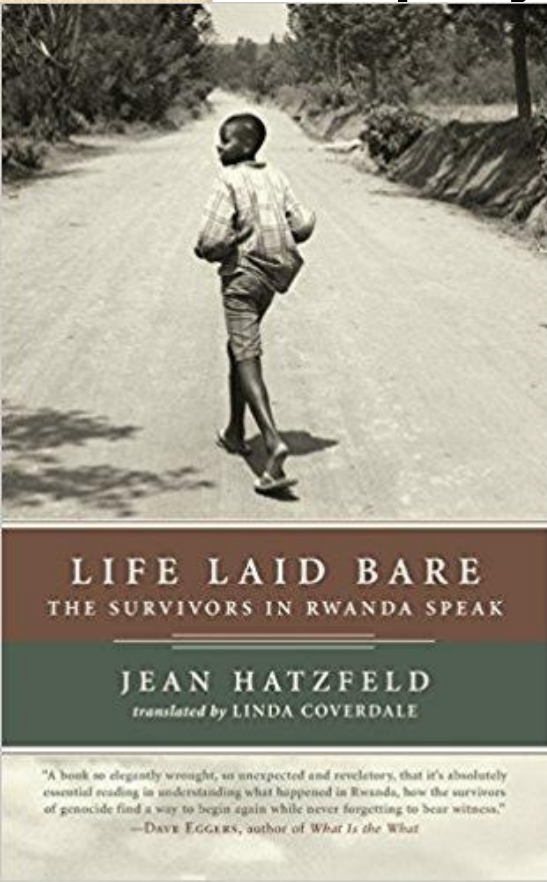


**“Something shocked and embarrassed me right away: lies matter more than truth. In these stories, the most important material will be lies and silence. The first time I had met sixteen-year-old Jeannette, she told me she had been hiding in the marshes for six months. It is impossible, I told her. Then she said, “six hours.” She can remember only some things distinctly. Angélique said that, “some memories are polished like glass; others are thrown down the hole of oblivion.” I understood that I was going to work with that memory, the lies (if you abandoned your child while running to save your life, you lie; also, several women survived because they were raped). My project was a different way of working that was not fiction and not journalism either. It was something else.”**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

**Risk to the nations involved in the story.**

**Example: Jean Hatzfeld**



**“Sylvie, one of the survivors [20 in total survived out of an entire village of 5000], had this superbly clever sentence that should be repeated in all schools of journalism: “the international reporters walked past our doors and did not bother to stop because they had no time to lose with people who were at a loss for words.”**

# I. What are the risks involved in getting a story?

## Risk to the nations involved in the story.

**Example: Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, *L'inavouable***

Patrick de Saint-Exupéry

## *L'inavouable*

La France au Rwanda

les arènes

Des soldats de notre pays ont formé,  
sur ordre, les tueurs du génocide tutsi.

Nous les avons armés, encouragés  
et, le jour venu, exfiltrés.

J'ai découvert cette histoire malgré moi,  
dans les collines rwandaises.

Il faisait chaud, c'était l'été.  
Il faisait beau, c'était magnifique.

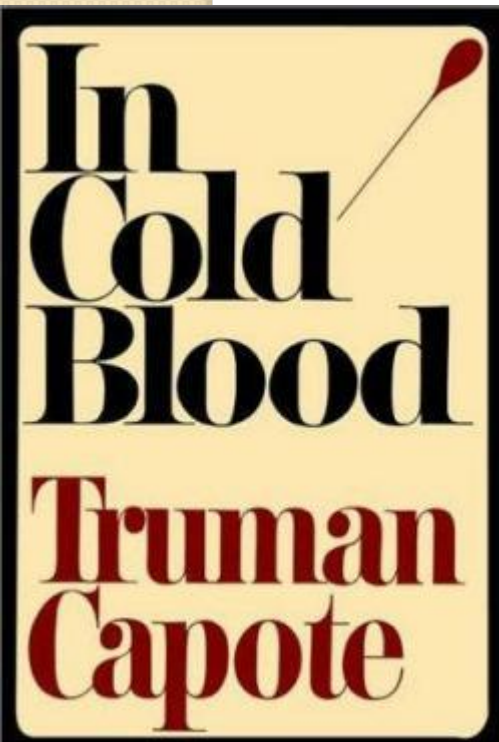
C'était le temps du génocide.

Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, editor in chief of *XXI*, is a *grand reporter* who covered the Rwanda massacre for *Le Figaro* of the Tutsis by the Hutus over a period of 100 days in 1994. With an estimated 1,000,000 people killed, Rwanda lost nearly 20 percent of its population and 70 percent of the Tutsi tribe). St. Exupéry described that, with so many dead, there were few witnesses who could be interviewed or brought to courts later for their testimonies, and those who did survive were in seclusion and could only report on the limited vision of the genocide that they saw from their hiding places.

## 2. What are the boundaries separating fact from fiction?

**Examples: Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood***

**Sandy Campbell in 1963 was hired as a fact checker by the *New Yorker*, where Capote was already a valued contributor. Campbell was assigned to the “*In Cold Blood*” project at Capote’s request, and in October 1964 traveled with him to the Kansas town where the murders had taken place.**



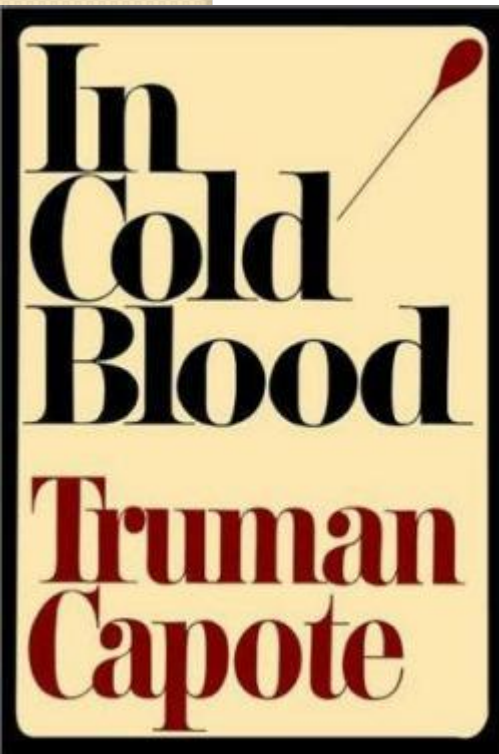
**Capote wrote to lead Detective Alvin’s wife Marie on 16 August 1961:**

**“Marie, do you remember telling me that the first time you ever heard of Hickock and Smith was when Alvin came home one night and showed you their “mug-shots”...? Well, I want to do this as a “scene” between you and Alvin. Can you remember anything more about it (not that I mind inventing details, as you will see!)”**

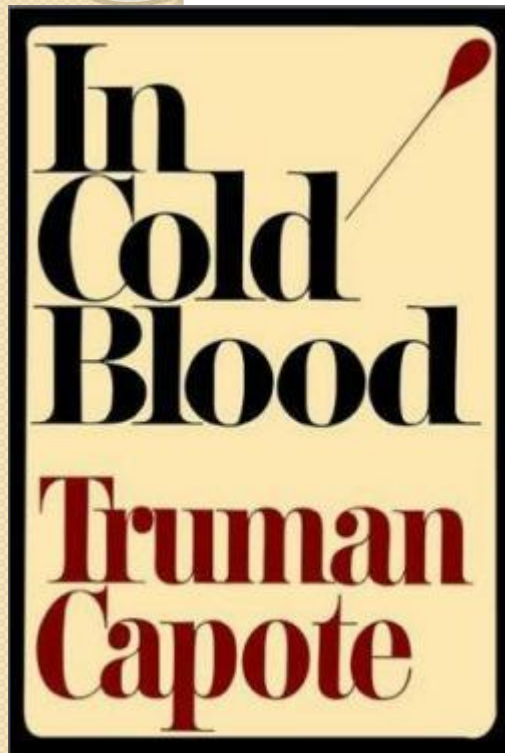
## 2. What are the boundaries separating fact from fiction?

Capote made nearly five thousand changes from the article to the book, ranging from crucial matters of fact to the placement of a comma. Capote claimed his book was nearly perfect in accuracy, including his quotes, though he used no recorder nor took notes. (He said he practiced from 1954 for about a year and half with friends who would read to him from a book and he would then write down what they said, reaching 92 percent accuracy for word per word). His new art form contained poetic altitude fiction did not seem precisely assertion of complete accuracy.

Many of his changes were done to what he claimed were “official documents” from which he drew his facts. The impression persists search and his style. Careful analysis of the *New Yorker* version and the final Random House edition show numerous alterations, and since many of these were done to the official documents including his interviews, it is all the more surprising that they might be subject to revision.



## 2. What are the boundaries separating fact from fiction?



**This also raises the question of the fact-checker's ethics. If he or she finds a fake element to the story but decides it is not false enough and could even add to the clarity of the story's greater truth, it is an ethical call to keep the error or the lie.**

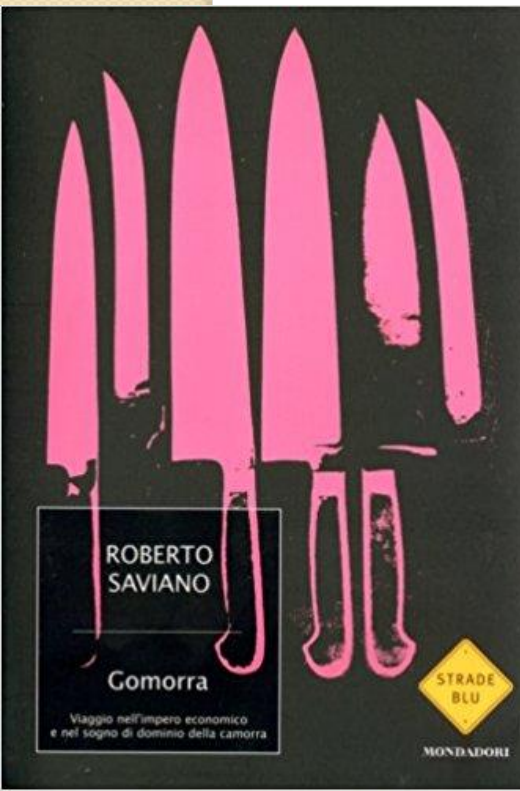
**See for instance *The Life Span of a Fact* by James Faggie.**

## 2. What are the boundaries separating fact from fiction?

Saviano invents as well in *Gomorra*, diluting facts with vivid and emotive description to bring home to the reader what is happening. His approach in fact led to some controversy when it transpired that Saviano had fabricated elements of his account, such as his description of the funeral of Annalisa Durante in the book.

Saviano changes or adds details without openly declaring it to the reader, such as Annalisa's friends ringing her mobile phone that is lying on her coffin as it is carried out of the church, which adds pathos to the scene of the innocent girl's funeral:

“the new requiem. Musical tones, a sweet melody. No one answers”.

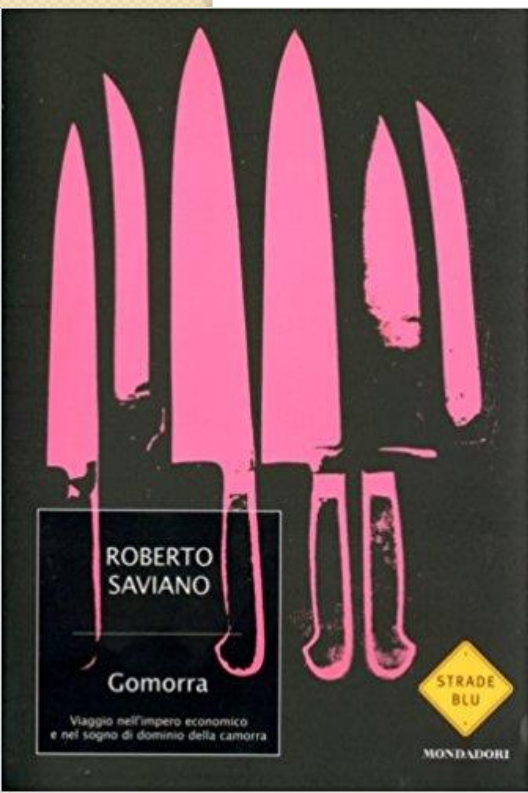


## 2. What are the boundaries separating fact from fiction?

It was a deliberate decision on the part of Saviano to grab his readers' attention, as he explained in an interview:

“I wanted to ‘bastardise’ because I knew that this subject, if it had not been treated in a different way, would have been written off either as part of the thriller genre, or something similar, or as more specialist nonfiction.”

We can find a connection with New Journalism in Saviano's approach through the admiration that he expressed for Michael Herr and, in particular, for Herr's 1977 reportage-memoir hybrid *Dispatches*.



### 3. What is an author's responsibility to a story after it is published?

#### Examples: *Black Hawk Down*

The Battle of Mogadishu, 3-4 October 1993, was the largest firefight the U.S. had been involved in since the Vietnam War. The Mogadishu battle cost the lives of 18 Americans and hundreds of Somalis, including many women and children.

This battle through the eyes of Philadelphia's *The Inquirer* reporter, Mark Bowden, who interviewed more than seventy people in the years following the battle and consulted thousands of pages of official and at times classified documents. Each day for a month, he published in the Philadelphia's *The Inquirer* a story related to the two-day battle.

His story grew so popular in the U.S. that *Time* magazine picked it up and made a hero celebrity out of prisoner Michael Durant.

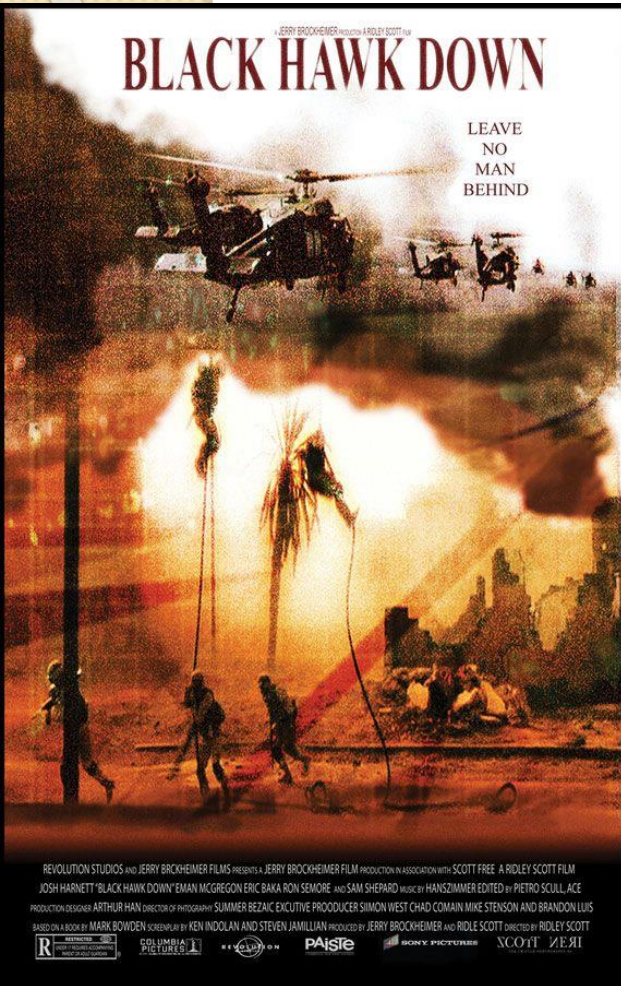


CW3 Mike Durant US Army

Super 64 lone survivor and Aidid hostage

# 3. What is an author's responsibility to a story after it is published?

## Examples: *Black Hawk Down*



Because of the stories' immense popularity, they were collected together into a book entitled *Black Hawk Down* (published by Penguin Books in 1997), which was recently made into a rather controversial movie by director Ridley Scott entitled *Black Hawk Down*, which was intended as a critique of the U.S. brass leading the operation but which ended up being celebrated as an American war film about courage and brotherhood among U.S. soldiers.

### 3. What is an author's responsibility to a story after it is published?

#### Examples: *Black Hawk Down*



And years later, it even became a video game, where Western teenagers can “kill” their own Somalians for fun.

“In addition to the single-player campaign, *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* features LAN and online multiplayer with support for up to 50 players in a single match, breaking the record for the largest console multiplayer battles at the time.”



CAR15 - Semi

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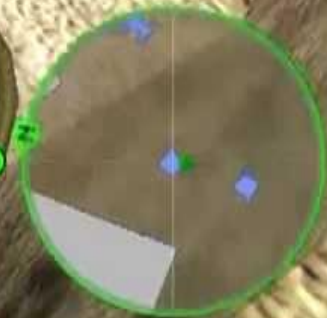
7 m to Foxtrot

Mission: Irene



M21

12/100



100/100  
1 m to shift  
Mission: Last Convoy

**So the ethical question becomes, what is the author's ethical considerations when he or she knows that they will make millions from their stories. Since literary journalism is now influencing Hollywood, does the call for riches influence the types of books literary journalists will write, does it influence their choice of subject material, if it sells more than another topic.**

## 4. What is a reader or a policy-maker's responsibility after the story is published?

### Example: Patrick de Saint-Exupéry's *L'inavouable*

His investigative reporting on the French involvement in Rwanda during its Civil War and subsequent genocide, coded *Opérations Amaryllis* (which was to evacuate foreign expatriates from Rwanda) and *Turquoise* (which was to protect innocent people but considered by many to have been set up to protect the Hutus from the Tutsi-led RPF) helped bring about the *Commission d'enquête citoyenne sur l'implication de la France au Rwanda*.

The Commission concluded in 1998 that President Mitterrand erred in judgment but that France was not directly responsible for the genocide itself, though it politically supported the Hutus. In 2008, Rwanda, which had conducted its own inquiry, accused 33 senior French military and political officials, including Mitterrand, of helping to train the Hutu militia involved in the genocide.

Patrick de Saint-Exupéry

## *L'inavouable*

La France au Rwanda

les arènes

Des soldats de notre pays ont formé,  
sur ordre, les tueurs du génocide tutsi.

Nous les avons armés, encouragés  
et, le jour venu, exfiltrés.

J'ai découvert cette histoire malgré moi,  
dans les collines rwandaises.

Il faisait chaud, c'était Pété.  
Il faisait beau, c'était magnifique.

C'était le temps du génocide.

# Conclusions

- 1. Literary journalists often do put themselves in harm's way to get a story. That is a personal choice of the writer's, and the ethics behind it suggest that, as long as the story is important enough and the author's life-risking tactics do not put anyone else in harm's way, there is no breach in journalistic ethics and integrity.**
- 2. If, however, the author's life-risking tactics include risking the lives of those involved in the story, ethics are breached.**
- 3. In both the researching and recounting of the story, no fiction should be allowed to enter the text. If it does, the book can never be publicized as literary journalism. It becomes creative non-fiction or even a novel.**

# Conclusions

- 4. The author is fully responsible for *all* outcomes of the publication of his or her story, short- and long-term.**
- 5. Furthermore, the newspaper, magazine or book publisher are also fully responsible for all outcomes of their role in the publication of the story.**
- 6. A reader and a policy-maker are *morally* responsible to follow-up on the story and make the necessary changes to improve the situation described. This ethical issue remains the hardest to implement and enforce.**



# Conclusions

**What, finally, are the responsibilities of the student, teacher and scholar after a story is published?**