

## **Plan**

Introduction

Chapter 1. Investigative journalism

Chapter 2. *All the President's Men* Carl Bernstein

Chapter 3. *Zodiac* Robert Graysmith

Chapter 4. *The Pelican Brief* John Grisham

Conclusions

“He’s the guy with the dangling cigarette, the grim visage, the belted trench coat, and the snap-brim Fedora. He slinks in and out of phone booths, talks out of the side of his mouth, and ignores other, lesser reporters.” This is how Anderson and Benjaminson<sup>1</sup> describe the image of an investigative reporter that persists in the public mind. However, this image, reinforced by numerous movies and books, could not be further from the truth. An investigative journalist goes well beyond these clichés and, unlike in movies where the mystery is solved in a few weeks or months, an investigation can go on for years and may not abound in exciting moments. Therefore, it is the primary objective of this dissertation to explore the complexity of the work of an investigative reporter and compare it with its presentation in three American novels, both fiction and non-fiction.

The first section of the paper is focused on the facts, as the author discusses the history of investigative journalism, which is perhaps as long as the history of journalism. However, it started to gain importance only in the twentieth century; in the United States, the term “muckraker” was coined in 1906 to describe people who are now labeled investigative reporters. This form of journalism was highly popular until World War I, and later regained significance only in the 1960s. Besides presenting historical background of the profession and most famous cases of how investigative reporting uncovered the truth, the author discusses the details of this profession, its main goals and importance for the society, as well as dangers and risks associated with it. Furthermore, there can be no doubt that this work is often considered morally dubious, as it involves employing techniques perceived as dishonest, immoral, or even illegal. These are treated as a means to an end, and the end is, in most cases, uncovering the truth about the cases of breaking the law, corruption, and hypocrisy. The question thus arises

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<sup>1</sup> D. Anderson and P. Benjaminson, *Investigative Reporting* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 3.

whether such means are justifiable, and this chapter also touches upon the question of ethics of investigative reporting.

Perhaps the most famous case of investigative journalism to date is Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's discovery of the Watergate scandal in 1973. Those two reporters of *The Washington Post* helped to reveal the truth about one of the greatest political scandals of the twentieth century, as a result of which Richard Nixon resigned the office of the presidency and the public trust in politicians was greatly undermined for decades that followed. It is difficult to think of any other instance of journalist investigation that had more profound consequences than the one conducted by Bernstein and Woodward. This classic case is discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, basing on *All the President's Men*, the book written by Bernstein and Woodward in 1974, which chronicles their investigation.

Chapter 3, in turn, is focused on *Zodiac*, a 1986 non-fiction book by Robert Graysmith. The novel tells the story of a serial killer Zodiac, who operated in California in the 1960s and 1970s, and whose identity has never been discovered. Graysmith's book presents his own investigation of this case, as he worked for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, to which the killer sent letters that he wanted to be published in the newspaper. Intrigued by the mystery whose solution eluded law enforcement bodies, Graysmith started to collect materials so as to determine the identity of Zodiac. His investigation of Zodiac's case is explored in detail in the third chapter of the thesis.

The last novel analyzed in this paper is *The Pelican Brief* (1992), written by John Grisham. This text, as opposed to *All the President's Men* and *Zodiac*, is not based on a real story, thus it may be interesting to compare the true face of investigative reporting with its romanticized version in Grisham's novel. The plot traces the story of a young student of a law school, who investigates the assassination of two Supreme Court Justices, with the help of Gray Grantham, a reporter for *The Washington Post*. Although the characters and the story itself is fictional, it raises some important issues about journalist's responsibilities. Chapter 4 is devoted to the analysis of this book.

All things considered, this dissertation aims at presenting different faces of investigative journalism, starting from describing the realities of this profession, going through their more or less faithful presentation in non-fiction literature, ending with their romanticized and clichéd portrayal in fiction novels.