

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts as qualified by University of Strathclyde regulation 3.51. Due Acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

## Abstract

Watergate reporting by *The Washington Post's* Woodward and Bernstein is accepted as a significant feat of investigative journalism which raised the profile of this genre to worldwide heights. This study contends the cultural fame of the journalists' work overshadowed their investigative methods. It uncovers hidden roots of investigative journalism in the US and UK and identifies key reporting lessons which can be drawn from Woodward and Bernstein's investigation. These fifteen investigative steps are analysed alongside the author's own published work over the last two decades. Case studies are used to explain how specific procedures and techniques undertaken by the *Post's* team have been, and can be, used in other contexts. The thesis places this study amongst normative approaches to the genre and argues purely administrative interest in investigative journalism fails to identify the drivers which underpin commitment to this specialisation. Ettema and Glasser's rendering of investigative journalists as uniquely possessing a 'morally engaged voice' is cited as being of great relevance to the case studies contained herein. The legacy investigative journalism had on legal and political spheres in the USA is debated on the basis of new information recorded in interviews in this work. Of note is the inter-connected relationship between the Watergate investigation by the *Post*, simultaneous Congressional inquiries into Nixon, and the subsequently created US Office of Independent Counsel. The Clinton-Lewinsky scandal is scrutinised and the poor performance of the post-Watergate US press during this timeframe is analysed. The evolution of investigative journalism in the UK before and after Watergate is charted, new trans-Atlantic professional relationships are identified and the complex impact of the *Post's* work is assessed. The implications of new technology against a changing media industry backdrop, alongside the results of new studies noted in the text, lead the findings of the thesis to contend that a marriage of the cited techniques used in Watergate and innovative newsgathering practices and multi-platform modes of publication, could lead to investigative journalism being one genre which could survive and thrive in an uncertain future.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction: ‘To search out and discover the news’</b>	<b>1</b>
Theoretical relevance and context	3
Methodology	18
<b><u>Chapter One</u></b>	
<b>Why is investigative journalism relevant today?</b>	<b>22</b>
Case Study: Stuart Gair Appeal	25
‘The mother of all stitch-ups’	29
Press coverage of two cases	39
Watergate lessons used in Gair case	43
<b><u>Chapter Two</u></b>	
<b>Moving towards a working definition of ‘investigative journalism’</b>	<b>47</b>
Dissenters to the term ‘investigative journalism’	49
Case Study – Hairmyers hospital	53
Investigative Journalism in UK context Pre-Watergate	65
Bob Greene investigates pre-Watergate Nixon	82
<b><u>Chapter Three</u></b>	
<b>Was Watergate a turning point in investigative journalism?</b>	<b>91</b>
What is Watergate?	91
Watergate did not invent ‘investigative journalism’	93
Woodward and Bernstein’s unremarkable professional roots	93
The progression of the <i>Post’s</i> Watergate investigation	99
<b><u>Chapter Four</u></b>	
<b>The Post investigation as blueprint</b>	<b>103</b>
The use of sources	106
Working patterns	107
Forsaking Speed, for accuracy	108
Working from facts outwards not from thesis inwards	109
Editorial Oversight	110
Veronica Guerin and poor oversight	112
Strong Editor-Reporter relationship	114
Maintaining focus in face of official denials	116
Case Study: Nuclear Test Veterans	116
Managing Delivery Timescales	120
Desk skills	121
Case Study: Nazi Investigation	122
Contrasting skills	124
Case Study: Chinook helicopter crash	125

## **Chapter Five**

<b>Immediate significance of Watergate</b>	<b>131</b>
The Impact of Watergate	132
The initial impact of the Watergate investigation on US and UK journalism	139
Watergate, ‘Deep Throat’ and the continuing debate on using sources	147
Case Study: Scandinavian-Scottish suicide	158

## **Chapter Six**

<b>Long-term evolution of investigative journalism in the USA/UK</b>	<b>170</b>
Did Watergate increase US and UK student numbers studying journalism?	171
Watergate, the US press and post-Nixon investigations	173
The Post-Watergate ‘Arizona Project’	175
The press and President Reagan: On Bended Knee?	177
Case Study: Channel 4 TV ‘The Tax-Trap’	182
The ‘chilling effect’ in the US and the failure of the press with Iran-Contra	189
Watergate and the Office of the Independent Counsel (OIC)	192
Watergate, the OIC and implications for press investigation of President Clinton	196

## **Conclusion: Contemporary investigative journalism in UK**

<b>And USA and looking forward</b>	<b>221</b>
A mixed picture	224
Case Study: Robert Brown	230
Investigation journalism in US and UK now	236
Future opportunities for investigative journalism	239
Conclusions	245

## **Appendix**

Stuart Gair	250
Hairmyers	251
Robert Brown	252
John Suffield	253
Hep C	254
Gecas	255
Chinook	256
Billy Harris	257
Deepcut	258
Echelon	259
Israeli Embassy	260

<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>261</b>
---------------------	------------

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank colleagues in the Department of English Studies, University of Strathclyde, for their help over the past four years, in particular my supervisor Prof. Brian McNair who helped and assisted me during its writing in numerous insightful ways. Dr Michael Higgins, my internal examiner, has also been a supportive, patient and helpful presence. I would also like to express sincere gratitude to the external examiner of this thesis, Prof. Hugo de Burgh, for his assistance, feedback and guidance. I would also like to single out the following individuals for thanks for their considerable time during extended interviews used in this thesis: Gavin MacFadyen; Philip Knightley; Lowell Bergman; Jeffrey Wigand; Peter Taylor; Ben Bradlee. Steven Brill also helped me at a crucial stage. I would especially like to record my sincere gratitude to the late Bob Greene, of Long Island, who sadly passed away before this work was completed. David Lloyd the former commissioning editor for Channel 4's *Dispatches* series helped me at the beginning of my investigative career and served as a mentor for a number of years. Gus Macdonald and Blair Jenkins have supported my work for the last two decades and many of the most important investigations undertaken in that timeframe would not have happened were it not for them. Colleagues at various newspapers and production companies also helped me in small and large ways during this project. Also, my extended family in the UK, Ireland and the USA deserve sincere gratitude for their patience and kindness throughout the writing of this thesis. Finally, I am also grateful to my wife Sarah O'Neill for her support, good humour and fortitude as I researched and completed this work. During the most important final phase of this study's production, she bravely and safely delivered our twin sons Lorcán and Cormac into an uncertain world. With my deepest heartfelt gratitude, it is to all three of them I wish dedicate this thesis: '*What's past is prologue.*'