

Istraživačko novinarstvo u filmu

Klarić, Petra

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2022

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Croatian Studies / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Fakultet hrvatskih studija**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:111:178670>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-07-12**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Repository of University of Zagreb, Centre for Croatian Studies](#)





UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB
FACULTY OF CROATIAN STUDIES
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Petra Klarić

Investigative Journalism In Film

BACHELOR THESIS

Zagreb, June 2022



UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB
FACULTY OF CROATIAN STUDIES
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Petra Klarić

Investigative Journalism In Film

BACHELOR THESIS

Mentor: Spomenka Bogdanić, Lecturer

Zagreb, June 2022

Content

1. Introduction.....	1
2. A brief history of journalism	2
3. History of journalism in film	3
4. Journalism, film and myths: Heroes and villains	5
4.1. A deeper look into a mythical journalist	6
4.2. Ethical aspect of journalism and its representation in film	8
5. Film analysis.....	9
5.1. All the President's Men	9
5.2. The Pelican Brief	11
5.3. The Paper	12
5.4. Spotlight	14
6. Conclusion	17
References	18

Summary

Journalism is a profession that accompanies people through their daily lives and provides them with information about the world around them since ancient Rome. From the very beginnings of the development of journalism, journalistic ethics has been at the heart of social debates. With the beginning of the development of film at the beginning of the 20th century, these debates moved to the screens. The way investigative journalism and journalists have been portrayed on film varied greatly, depending on the social climate at the time the film was made. In general, the characters of film journalists can be divided into two categories: heroes and villains. However, even when journalists are portrayed as villains, we can interpret that portrayal as constructive criticism. The investigative process in the film and the qualities of investigative journalists are presented through the analysis of four films in which the main backbone is investigative journalism.

Keywords: investigative journalism, journalists, film, portrayal

1. Introduction

The subject of this thesis is investigative journalism in film, more specifically, the way this profession has been portrayed in one of popular culture's most prominent products – film.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the news reporting profession can be traced back to ancient Rome, when the first piece of journalistic work, Acta Diurna, saw the light of day. Acta Diurna was what we would today call a report on daily events, such as public speeches. From then on, journalism established itself as a profession of high value, especially in liberal democratic societies. However, as the famous proverb says, with great power comes great responsibility. Therefore, from its beginnings journalism has been a topic of public debates, especially the ethical aspect of journalism. One of the best ways to observe public opinion on investigative journalism through popular culture is to analyze it in film. While journalism has been a topic of many books and plays, even before the era of film, films (especially Hollywood produced films) seem to have the biggest reach and therefore the biggest impact on public opinion.

The aim of this thesis is to portray the representation of investigative journalism through popular culture, more specifically through film, and the way that representation reflects the public opinion on this profession.

The first part of this thesis will portray a short history of journalism.

The second part of this thesis will be about the development of journalism in film.

The third part will review the importance of ethics in journalism and the way this important aspect of journalism translates into film.

The fourth and final part of this thesis will be an analysis of investigative journalism through four films in which investigative journalism and journalists are the main focus: All the President's Men (1976), The Pelican Brief (1993), The Paper (1994) and Spotlight (2015).

2. A brief history of journalism

American Press Institute (2019) defines journalism as the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information, but the term is also used for the product of these activities. However, scholars still don't agree whether journalism can be traced back to ancient times or if it is a product of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Carey (2007) agrees with Michael Schudson who said that something significant happened during those two centuries – a shift from the predictable, archetypal, traditional, epic and heroic to individual, common, unique, useful, original, novel and new. Carey (2007) claims that news and reporting were not an invention of the eighteenth century, but journalism certainly was. He believes it developed because of merchants, bankers and traders, who were in dire need of new information, whether it be about the conditions on the market or the decisions of royal authorities. However, very soon other groups in the society of that time also developed a taste for new information and journalism became a widespread phenomenon. Carey said that, for this to happen, at least three conditions were necessary.

“For this practice to emerge on a significant scale, at least three conditions were necessary: The ability to read and write had to be widespread, cheap paper and writing instruments had to be easily and cheaply available, and a belief had to emerge that the life of the individual was important enough that it was worthwhile for someone to record the events, moods, happenings, and emotions—the passing details of one’s own life. But keeping a journal is not the same as keeping a newspaper.” (Carey, 2007, p. 7)

Carey (2007) highlights another important moment in the history of journalism – the forming of the public sphere in which people could discuss news without the fear of royal involvement. Since then, journalism has provided a mode in which public opinion may form and express itself. Besides informing the public on the daily happenings, journalism became a watchdog, whose task became keeping an eye on the state.

3. History of journalism in film

The history of journalism in film can be observed from the very beginnings of the sound era in film. Ehrlich (2004, p. 12-13) says that journalism filmography includes more than 2000 entries, including silents, foreign films, made-for-TV-movies, and countless B pictures. He adds that some of those are considered to be among the greatest of all American films. Ehrlich (2004, p. 1) highlights 13 films that played an important role in portraying the profession of journalism in film. Those films are: *The Front Page*, *His Girl Friday*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Citizen Kane*, *Ace in the Hole*, *Deadline, USA*, *All the President's Men*, *Network*, *Absence of Malice*, *The Killing Fields*, *Broadcast News*, and *The Insider*. Ehrlich (2004, p. 1) claims that these movies portrayed journalists as both heroes and villains, but he also highlights that through these films “Hollywood has reproduced myths in which the press is always at the heart of things and always makes a difference” (Ehrlich, 2004, p. 1). In the continuation of this part of the thesis, each of these films will be briefly described according to IMDB, the most famous internet movie database.

The Front Page is a 1974 film directed by Billy Wilder in which a strict editor makes one of his top reporters to cover one last crime story before retirement.

His Girl Friday is a 1940 film directed by Howard Hawks which follows a story of an editor that tries to stop his ex-wife and reporter from remarrying.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington is a 1939 drama/comedy about a young man going to work at U.S. Senate. After arriving to Washington, his idealistic bubble is soon crushed by corrupt politicians.

Citizen Kane is a 1941 drama/mystery directed by Orson Wells. The film follows a story of a murder of the media tycoon, who's reporters try to figure out what the meaning is behind his last word – “rosebud”.

Ace in the Hole is a 1951 film directed by Billy Wilder that follows a story of a city reporter stuck in Albuquerque struggling to find a story to write about.

Deadline, USA is a 1952 film directed by Richard Brooks following a story of an editor of soon-to-be sold newspaper trying to get his last big story.

Network is a 1976 film directed by Sidney Lumet that portrays a story of a television network that releases ex anchor's ramblings for profit, but it backfires.

Absence of Malice is a 1981 film directed by Sydney Pollack, it follows a story of a prosecutor that leaks a fake story about a liquor warehouse owner.

The Killing Fields is a 1984 war drama directed by Roland Joffe that follows a story of a journalist trapped in Cambodia during “Year Zero” campaign.

Broadcast News is a 1987 film directed by James L. Brooks about two rival television reporters.

The Insider is a 1999 film directed by Michael Mann that follows a story of a chemist who exposed big tobacco companies.

4. Journalism, film and myths: Heroes and villains

Before we delve into representation of journalism and journalists in film, we need to establish what makes a good journalist. Bill Kovach and Tim Rosenstiel (2021) claim that a journalist's biggest obligation should be providing “independent, reliable, accurate and comprehensive information that citizens require to be free”. Therefore, Ehrlich (2004) considers journalism to be as vital as law and medicine. He adds that if medicine is a pursuit of healing and law is a pursuit of justice, journalism should be in a pursuit of truth and therefore its main aim should be seeking the truth and reporting on it.

But how have these expectations translated into the world of film? Well, it is safe to say that not all portrayals of journalism in film have been positive. Journalists have sometimes been portrayed as heroes, but oftentimes they also took on the role of a villain, ready to do anything to get their “scoop”. So, while Ehrlich says that “films regularly have suggested that the journalist can see through lies and hypocrisy, stick up for the little guy, uncover the truth, and serve democracy”, he also adds that “those things are no longer true because the journalist and the press have lost their way, they were true once upon a time and someday could be true again.” (Ehrlich, 2004, p. 1)

This notion is actually in line with what journalists and their critics deem desirable in the world of journalism, and where this profession falls short to fulfill those expectations. Many people criticize journalism because it only cares for profit and is oftentimes a catalyst for “dazzling, adolescent, irresponsible, fearless” infotainment. Many also consider this “lacking journalism” to be the main reason behind the lessening of democratic participation. Ehrlich (2004) claims that these struggles the press faces are evident in the public perception of it, with polls showing the public considers journalists to be as reliable as a washed-up car salesman and lawyers. Ehrlich (2004) also adds that Hollywood holds a part of the blame for the current state of journalism because it creates myths that journalists are “hard-drinking, foul-mouthed, dim-witted social misfits concerned only with twisting the truth into scandal and otherwise devoid of conscience, respect for basic human dignity or a healthy fear of God.” Many consider these negative portrayals to be a distortion of reality and a dangerous undermining of professional authority and institutions. But, Ehrlich considers these portrayals important

because they tackle some problems that have been a part of journalism for a long time, but at the same time they highlight the fact that journalism should be done ethically.

In order to fully understand the perception of journalism and journalists, it is also important to mention how journalists view themselves. McNair (2010) states that it seems that journalists hate themselves just as much as non-journalists do. Still, McNair says that, out of all the journalists he met, only some of them can be characterized as “misfits”.

While it may be true that journalists are often perceived negatively, the real state of things is not that pessimistic. McNair (2010) says that journalists are oftentimes also adored and respected for their work and crucial role they play in liberal democratic societies. He adds that people seem to love the figure of an “investigative journalist who tirelessly campaigns to get an innocent man out of prison, or a corrupt politician out of office; the foreign correspondent who risks her life to reach a town or village where civilians are under siege from marauding armies; the dedicated seeker-after-truth who fights against the censorial tendencies of advertisers and corporate sponsors”. Thanks to this, journalists can achieve celebrity status and have a big impact. Good examples of this are Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward who discovered the Watergate scandal, but there are also domestic examples of this phenomenon, Ivo Pukanić being one of them.

4.1. A deeper look into a mythical journalist

James Jacob Liszka (1989, p. 164) defines myth as a symbolic, idealized representation of social reality, to which it is organically related. Journalism very well may be considered a social reality which is symbolically and idealistically represented in films, which Ehrlich (2004) calls purveyors of myth. He claims that Hollywood films are often centered around two competing myths: an outlaw hero and a real hero. In a way, these myths depict everything an average American strives to be as an individual, but also as a part of the collective.

The outlaw hero, as commonly represented by “the adventurer, explorer, gunfighter, wanderer, and loner” reflects “that part of the American imagination valuing self-determination and freedom from entanglements.” The official hero, as typically represented by “a teacher, lawyer, politician, farmer, or family man” reflects “the

American belief in collective action, and the objective legal process that supercede[s] private notions of right and wrong.” (Ehrlich, 2004, p. 8)

Films about journalism have followed the same pattern. The outlaw journalists, says Ehrlich, are depicted as loners and wanderers with little hope and a lack of trust in governmental institutions, often very skeptical of society's betterment. On the other hand, a “true hero” type of journalist is depicted as a dedicated public servant who believes that journalism can facilitate constructive change through reporting the truth. Ehrlich adds that these “mythical journalists” represent mythical virtues. On the one hand, the outlaw journalist represents individualism and freedom, while the official journalist represents community and progress.

Besides this hero duo, there is also a villain duo – an outlaw villain and an official villain. An outlaw villain type of journalist is an outsider who does not care about what is moral. His main prerogative is himself, and all he cares about is a good story. The official villain type of journalist, on the other hand, is someone who represents “the media”, a part of a machinery that strives to take our freedom away from us.

Through these two contrasting types of journalists contributed to the public's view on the press. Firstly, thanks to the hero category of journalists, the public sees journalism as an honorable craft that strives to protect the people from powerful institutions. The villain category, on the other hand, further amplifies the public's view of journalism a shallow and compromised craft.

Ehrlich argues that “even when movies portray the journalist as a scoundrel and the press as corrupt, they still tend not to challenge seriously the idea that the press can and should play a central role in society” (Ehrlich, 2004, p. 8) He also adds that, even when the depicted journalist is not a moral figure, it often gets a deserved punishment. That punishment has a very important role of highlighting what honorable journalism should be and, through a scapegoat figure, reinforces social norms and confirms the status quo and journalism's place in it.

4.2. Ethical aspect of journalism and its representation in film

Good (2007, p. 10) says that for journalists, as well as scientists and teachers, the good life is an intellectual life. He further adds that journalists believe in learning about the world by observing events, or alternatively, if they are not able to witness an event, they are supposed to inspect the materials that document the event. In reporting, journalists should only publish true information that have been thoroughly checked. Good (2007, p. 12) offers an example of journalists failing to do proper fact-checking – a mining accident in West Virginia. The press falsely reported that all twelve miners survived the accident, when in fact only one of them survived. These news spread like wildfire and soon a huge portion of media, including big media houses, broadcast this false information. The news editors then tried to defend their papers by claiming they got these false information from “elite media sources”, but in reality they should have waited for solid proof. Another great example of this can be seen in the movie *The Paper* (1994). The protagonist of the movie, Henry Hackett (Michael Keaton) does everything in his power to stop his newspaper, *The New York Sun*, from publishing information that was not true, even though it came from a policeman, who would usually be considered a valid official source. Good (2007, p. 13) says that there is an important lesson to be learned here, and it is to always make sure that the information journalists report on should be true, even if it sometimes may be challenging, especially with ever-changing events.

5. Film analysis

This part of the thesis will be dealing with specific movies and the way they portray journalists and journalism, more specifically investigative journalism and journalists. These four movies are from different time periods, dealing with different stories in a different way, but what they do have in common is they are focused on investigative journalism and the investigative process that comes with it. Investigative journalism is hard to define, but most consider it to be the most prestigious form of journalism. What makes investigative journalism different from other forms of journalism? Julian Assange once described it as the “noble art of seizing reality back from the powerful, and that process is adequately portrayed in all four of these movies.”

5.1. All the President's Men

All The President's Men is a 1976 film produced by Walter Coblenz, based on the 1974 book of the same title written by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward . This film follows a true story about two journalists, Bob Woodward (Robert Redford) and Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman), who investigated the Watergate scandal for The Washington Post. The Watergate scandal involved a break-in into the headquarters of The National Democratic Committee in Washington D.C. – Watergate Office Building. Upon arresting the five perpetrators, it was discovered that they are being represented by lawyers they obviously could not afford based on their socio-economic status, which attracted Woodward's attention. Woodward also finds out that the burglars are connected to some of Nixon's most prominent advisors – E. Howard Hunt and Charles Colson.

After that, Woodward pitches the story to his editors, and while his editor Harry Rosenfeld (Jack Worden) believes this is a story worth of investigation, the chief editor Benjamin Bradlee is more reluctant but encourages further investigation. At this point, Bradlee assigns another journalist, Carl Bernstein, to help Woodward with an investigation of the story.

Another key player in their investigative process is Woodward's source nicknamed Deep Throat whose identity is unknown. He is a very secretive senior government official that often speaks in metaphors, but he gives them an essential tip to "follow the money".

After listening to his advice to "follow the money", Woodward and Bernstein discover that the burglars are connected with Nixon's Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP). Even with that evidence, the editors are still unsure whether there is a big story behind all this. They doubt that Nixon would involve himself in a scandal when he was a clear favorite to be re-elected. Journalists then connect a slush fund worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to a former CRP treasurer Hugh W. Sloan and that discovery leads them to connect the same fund to H. R. Haldeman, chief of Nixon's staff and to a former attorney general John N. Mitchell who is now chief of CRP. They found out that the slush fund was used to sabotage the Democrats even before the Watergate scandal. Chief editor Bradlee then asks Woodward and Bernstein to confirm the story through other sources, which proves to be a hard task as Nixon's administration instructed their employees to not say anything, they "closed ranks".

Woodward then meets Deep Throat and demands that he stops being evasive and gives them real proof. Deep Throat then reveals that Haldeman is the mastermind behind the whole scandal. More shockingly, he reveals that the whole American intelligence community is in on it. This information finally got Bradlee to get behind the story, which resulted in it being published on the front page.

5.1. Woodward and Bernstein

The story mainly focuses on two journalists responsible for bringing this story to the light of day – Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. Woodward is a young journalist that, at the time, recently started working for The Washington Post. Carl Bernstein, on the other hand, is more experienced but has fallen in a rut and is often criticized for the quality of his work. These two journalists are two very different people with different outlooks on life, but that could be a part of the reason they work so well together.

Woodward seems to be more "well put together" and he is usually the one to be more civil approaching things with more reservation. Bernstein is completely different, a bit rugged, always smoking cigarettes but more willing to take a rough approach. Bernstein

is also more experienced and often gives professional advice to Woodward. Still, Woodward's approach has proven to be more fruitful in some cases when Bernstein's rough approach failed to give results. Both of them showed that they are capable of doing the research in what proved to be one of the biggest scandals in the US history. Woodward and Bernstein could both be characterized as hero journalists because they both showed that they have a required skill set, and they never disclosed their sources, even when the publishing of the story depended on it.

5.2. The Pelican Brief

The Pelican Brief is a 1993 mystery thriller directed by Allan J. Pacula that follows a story of a young law student Darby Shaw (Julia Roberts) and her Washington Herald journalist accomplice Gray Grantham (Denzel Washington). This film is based on the 1992 novel written by John Grisham.

The film starts with Shaw writing a legal brief on what she suspects is a reason behind the murders of two Supreme Court justices Jensen and Rosenberg. She shows the brief to her lover and professor Thomas Callahan who, upon looking at it, forwards it to his friend who works as a counsel to the Director of the FBI. Soon afterwards, Callahan is killed by a car bomb, and Darby starts suspecting that what she wrote in her brief may be the truth. Her theory is that the assassinations were done by Victor Mattiece, an oil tycoon that wants to exploit the oil in Louisiana's marshland, which is a protected natural habitat for an endangered brown pelican species. The two murdered justices were very vocal on environment protection and wanted to stop Mattiece, so he planned to appoint justices in favor of drilling the area.

Scared for her life, Shaw goes into hiding while the assassins are trying to murder her. In the light of these events, she comes into contact with Gray Grantham, a journalist working for the Washington Herald with whom she shares her discovery, and he believes her.

Shaw and Grantham then connect the story to a lawyer working in the oil and gas division in a famous law firm in Washington DC – Curtis Morgan. When they try to contact him, they discover that he has been killed in a mugging. After that, they contact his widow, who gives them a key to the safe containing documents and tapes about the

case. After leaving the bank, Shaw and Grantham almost get killed in a car bomb, so they run to the Washington Herald offices to inspect the said tapes and documents. They find out that her assumptions are indeed true, and Grantham writes the story. They then confront the FBI, and they end up confessing that the President of the United States has seen the brief and ordered the FBI to back off because he was friends with Mattiece. Shaw ends up leaving the country under the witness protection program. The publishing of the story results in convictions of Mattiece and his lawyers, the resignation of the president's chief of staff, and the news that the president will not run for re-election.

5.2.1 Grantham and Shaw

Both of these characters can be considered heroes. They fought with everything they have to publish the story, even though they know publishing the story may result in both of them getting murdered. Grantham showcases everything a hero journalist should be, he is fearless and willing to help Shaw, his source, in any way possible. Even when everything was over and Shaw left the country, he still protected her identity as a real hero journalist should.

5.3. The Paper

The Paper is a 1994 drama/comedy directed by Ron Howard, it follows a hectic 24-hour cycle in the New York Sun office. The main character is Henry Hackett (Michael Keaton) who loves his job but struggles to find balance between his professional and private life. Hackett finds out that his chief editor is diagnosed with cancer and is looking for ways to reconnect with his family. This information makes him consider leaving the New York Sun to work as an assisting managing editor for a more prestigious newspaper, the New York Sentinel, so he could spend more time with his pregnant wife.

At the same time, a story about two murdered businessmen is circulating the city. The police arrested two young black men, but Hackett doubts that they are actually guilty. He goes to the New York Sentinel for a job interview, but he uses that chance to steal

the information they have on the story, which causes him to lose an opportunity to get this job.

Hackett becomes obsessed with the story of a double homicide of the two businessmen, so he gathers a team of journalists to work on this story. Another important character is Sun's managing editor Alicia Clark (Glenn Close), whose job is to get the paper out of financial struggles. Hackett and Clark have a history of not liking each other, and they have two very different perspectives on what to do with this story.

Hackett soon discovers, through his wife Martha (Marisa Tomei), that the two businessmen stole a large amount of money from their biggest investor – a truck company that has ties to the mafia. After finding this information, Hackett and McDougal confront a police officer who, after a long and persistent interrogation, confirms that the youngsters are not guilty.

Henry and McDougal then run back to the office, only to find out that Clark approved a front page in which the two young men are portrayed as guilty. Hackett and Clark then end up in a physical fight because she did not want to stop printing the paper even though the front page was incorrect.

Afterwards, the journalist gathered in a bar for some drinks, but Hackett gets into another confrontation, now with a city official Sandusky who Hackett has been writing about in his column. The fight soon leads to gun fire and one of the bullet hits Clark, who ends up in a hospital.

After arriving at the hospital, Clark changes her mind and calls the office in order to stop the printing of the headline. She corrects the headline into “They didn't do it!” The movie ends with the birth of Hackett's son in the same hospital Clark was sent to and the releasing of the two wrongly accused men.

5.3.1. Hackett and Clark

Throughout the film, Hackett is generally portrayed as a hero journalist, even if his actions are sometimes not entirely lawful. Even when he does bad things, he has greater good in mind. He does come off as a bit of a careless character, especially when it

comes to his pregnant wife, who he often neglects because of his job. Clarke, on the other hand, is not a moral character, she is very driven by profit. That being said, creating profit is what she is supposed to do, but the truth should not be sacrificed because of profit. She can be considered a villain type of journalist, but at the end she does make things right.

5.4. Spotlight

Spotlight is a 2015 drama based on true events, directed by Tom McCarthy and written by McCarthy and Josh Singer. It follows a story about The Boston Globe's team of investigative journalists called *Spotlight*, which is where this film got its name from. The main focus of the film is an investigation of numerous cases of systemic sexual abuse of children by the Roman Catholic priests in the greater Boston area. The main characters are four journalists of the Spotlight team – Walter Robinson (Michael Keaton), Mike Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo), Sascha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAddams), Matt Carroll (Brian d'Arcy James) and two editors – Marty Barron (Liev Schreiber) and Ben Bradlee Jr. (John Slattery).

The plot begins with the editor Marty Barron's first day on the job as The Boston Globe's managing editor. He reads the Globe's article, in which lawyer Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci) says that the Archbishop of Boston knew about the molestation of children by priests and did nothing. After finding this out, Barron meets with Robinson and orders that the Spotlight further investigates this story.

Journalist Rezendes then comes in contact with Garabedian who declines the interview, but Rezendes persuades him to talk by mentioning he works for the Spotlight. Garabedian was one of the few lawyers willing to represent victims that have been sexually abused by Roman Catholic priests. Others have been reluctant to do so due to the Catholic Church's influence in predominantly catholic Boston. These cases have often been swept under the rug, the priests would often face no real consequence for the crimes they committed, other than being sent to a new assignment at a different location.

When they started investigating the story, the Spotlight team believed that this was a rare occurrence, but they soon found out that this issue might be bigger than anyone expected. After talking to Phill Saviano who was the main man behind Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) they found out that they should widen their investigation to no less than 13 priests. Another shocking discovery was made after they talked to the former priest who worked at rehabilitation centers for priests that were sexually abusive towards children, who told the team that around 6% of priests were sexually abusive. That would mean that there are around 90 priests in Boston area that were involved in sexual abuse, which led them to inspect yearly priest registries. Through that, they noticed a pattern of priests being “on leave” for a year after they committed abuse, after further investigation they developed a list of 87 priests that were sent to such “leaves” in Boston. The only thing they now had to do was find their victims to confirm their suspicions.

As the investigation continued, members of the team were dealing with their own struggles revolving to the discoveries, most of them were either catholic or were living close to the priests in question, but had to stay silent in order not to reveal the story.

Then, the 9/11 happened and the story about abuse was pushed back. While some members of the team wanted it to be published as soon as possible in order to protect possible future victims, others argued that the story will have a bigger impact if they gather more information and reveal that this problem is systemic rather than an individual issue.

The biggest breakthrough for the team was winning the court case that allowed them to inspect the legal documents that proved the problem was systemic. After that, they started to write the story and published it in 2002. The story caused a worldwide scandal, revealing the names of sexually abusive priests all over the world.

5.4.1. The Spotlight Team

The Spotlight Team proved to be a team of hero journalists, they have gone head-to-head against powerful institutions in order to investigate this story and protect the

public, or more importantly, protect the children that faced sexual abuse from priests whose job should be to protect those children. The team did their job respectfully, they often put their safety and their relationships with family and close friendships at stake.

The biggest contrast in terms of villain and hero characters can be observed through editors Bradlee and Barron. Barron is a new face in town, he is a Jewish managing editor who often moved around for work. Editor Bradlee, on the other hand, is a Boston local and a devoted Catholic. When Barron came into office, he immediately noticed there could be a bigger story behind the information lawyer gave to the Globe, while Bradlee seems to be suspicious of the story, often pushing his head into the sand to justify his religion. Therefore, Barron can be characterized as a hero figure, willing to fight for what is right and not willing to give into pressure from powerful institutions. Bradlee can be characterized as a villain because he was willing to look away from the truth in order to protect himself and his beliefs.

6. Conclusion

Journalism has been an important topic in the world of film for almost a century. It offers a never-ending world of contrasts and an opportunity to investigate a story the same way a detective would. This aspect of portraying journalist should be further investigated because it can be of great importance not only for the journalist's self-perception, it can be used to bring media studies closer to the students, but also improve the picture of this profession in the minds of the students, journalists and general public.

Films about investigative journalism play an important role of portraying this profession, they help us understand how journalism is perceived in popular culture. It is safe to say that nowadays everyone has an opinion on journalism. Due to the state of the world of media today, most are negative, but journalist still manage to occasionally prove the public wrong by exposing important stories in order to protect the public. Journalists are often portrayed in films the same way. Sometimes they are heroes worth of praise, and sometimes they are villains that everyone despises. Still, journalism has proven time and time again that it has an important role in democratic societies, even when the public opinion is not in its favor.

References

1. Carey, J. W. (2007). A short history of journalism for journalists: A proposal and essay. *Harvard international journal of press/politics*, 12(1), 3-16.
2. Good, H. (2007). *Journalism ethics goes to the movies*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
3. Ehrlich, M. C. (2004). *Journalism in the Movies* (Vol. 131). University of Illinois Press.
4. Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2021). *The Elements of Journalism, Revised and Updated 4th Edition: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*. Crown Publishing Group (NY).
5. Liszka, J. J. (1989). *The semiotic of myth: A critical study of the symbol*. Indiana Univ. Press.
6. McNair, B. (2011). Journalists in film: heroes and villains. *Australian Journalism Review*, 33(1), 133-138.

Films:

1. Howard, R. (1994). *The Paper*. Universal Pictures.
2. McCarthy, T. (2015). *Spotlight*. Open Road Films (II).
3. Pakula, A. J. (1976). *All the President's Men*. Warner Bros. Pictures.
4. Pakula, A. J. (1993). *The Pelican Brief*. Warner Bros. Pictures.

Internet sources:

1. American Press Institute. (2019, November 15). What is journalism? Definition and meaning of the craft. Retrieved June 26, 2022, from <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/what-is-journalism/>
2. All the President's Men (1976) - IMDb. (2022). Retrieved 26 June 2022, from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074119/>
3. IMDb. (2008). IMDb - Movies, TV and Celebrities. Retrieved June 26, 2022, from <https://www.imdb.com/>
4. journalism | Definition, History, & Facts. (2022). Retrieved 26 June 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/journalism>
5. Spotlight (2015) - IMDb. (2022). Retrieved 26 June 2022, from https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1895587/?ref=fn_al_tt_1
6. The Paper (1994) - IMDb. (2022). Retrieved 26 June 2022, from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110771/>
7. The Pelican Brief (1993) - IMDb. (2022). Retrieved 26 June 2022, from https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107798/?ref=fn_al_tt_1