

# **INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS**

B A Seminar Paper  
19/10/2005

Seminar "Language of Protest – Language of Resistance:  
Sociolinguistic Perspectives on the Workings of Power and Struggle."  
Summer Term 2005  
PhD Danièle Klapproth

David Bauer  
Turnerstrasse 24  
4058 Basel  
061 683 58 66  
[david.bauer@stud.unibas.ch](mailto:david.bauer@stud.unibas.ch)

<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AS A JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Definition of the Term.....	4
A Short History of Investigative Journalism.....	5
<b>3 TODAY'S MEDIA SOCIETY AND ITS EFFECTS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Dependency on Media and Media concentration.....	6
<i>Dependency on Media</i> .....	7
<i>Media Concentration</i> .....	7
Silencing In and Through Media.....	8
<b>4 INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Resistance Against Delinquents.....	10
Resistance Against Accomplices.....	11
De-Silencing.....	11
Restrains to Work and Effects of Investigative Journalism.....	12
<i>Restrains Inherent in (Investigative) Journalism</i> .....	12
<i>Restrains from Outside</i> .....	13
The Twofold Character of Resistance.....	15
<b>5 CASE STUDY.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Notes on the Choice of Text.....	15
Notes on the Methodology.....	15
Analysis.....	16
<i>Identification of Victims and Offenders</i> .....	17
<i>Interaction with the Reader</i> .....	21
<i>Representation of Actors</i> .....	22
<i>Representation of Media and Journalists</i> .....	24
<i>Reversal of Assumptions</i> .....	25
Summarised Findings of the Case Study.....	25
<b>6 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Greg Palast: "How to Steal the Presidency and Get Away With It.".....	29
Norman Fairclough: "Critical Discourse Analysis in Practice: Description".....	29

*For when there is no longer anyone speaking out,  
who will be the last voice?  
John Pilger<sup>1</sup> ---*

## 1 INTRODUCTION.

Spartacus, Joan of Arc and King Arthur all have one thing in common: They have offered resistance in some way and their stories are surrounded by myth nowadays. Resistance tends to be mystified. It is perhaps no surprise investigative journalism, a form of resistance through language, is often surrounded by a myth, being considered as a “fine art or the supreme level of journalism”, as Ludwig (2002: 14) criticises. Its role as such is disputable and Ludwig suggests that investigative journalism is in fact “a craft and therefore learnable”. If it can be learned, which I consider a useful approach, then it follows rather strict rules, for example concerning language. In turn, this means that it can be analysed. This is what will be done in this paper.

However, the title of the paper might be slightly misleading. The aim of the paper is to provide an analysis of how investigative journalism resists through its particular language. To rely on a purely linguistic perspective would not be sufficient, though. If one intends to carry out an accurate analysis of the language of investigative journalism, which I obviously do, one needs to take into consideration the context in which it is embedded. The language of investigative journalism and its effects with regard to resistance can only be understood in relation to investigative journalism as a journalistic concept that might offer resistance.

Consequently, chapters 2 to 4 discuss the background against which chapter 5, the core part of my paper, must be read. They explain in what contexts and under which circumstances investigative journalism operates as a means of resistance. Chapter 5 then presents language as one key aspect in the resisting nature of investigative journalism. In a case study, Critical Discourse Analysis is used to show what is specific with the language of investigative journalism and how that language is used to offer resistance: in the given example against unsanctioned voter fraud in the presidential elections in the United States in 2000. An intriguing aspect that cannot be considered in this paper and must be put on hold for further study is the comparison of different texts of investigative journalism with regard to their potential to offer resistance on the one hand and between texts of investigative journalism and other (journalistic) forms of writing on the other.

---

<sup>1</sup> From Pilger (1998: 546)

## 2 INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AS A JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE.

### Definition of the Term

There are mainly two ways of defining investigative journalism, one being rather broad, the other narrower and more specific. A broad definition is that given by Benjamin C. Bradlee<sup>2</sup> (1993, as quoted in Janisch 1997: 15) who claims that “[a]ny kind of journalism, if you ask more than a couple of questions, becomes investigative by definition“. A similar definition is given by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), an association of investigative journalists: “In the old-fashioned sense, investigative reporting is simply good reporting.” Both definitions place investigative journalism firmly within common journalistic work, rather than claiming it was a specific branch of it. Thus reporting, one aspect of journalistic work, is equalled with investigative journalism whenever it is carried out properly. Bradlee assumes a low threshold by saying that “more than a couple of questions” are already enough to be investigative. According to this definition, investigative journalism would be a wide field within journalism, being a journalistic tool, rather than a journalistic branch.

It appears more useful, especially for the purpose of this paper, to define distinctive features of investigative journalism and clearly setting it apart from other branches of journalism, as for example from “Verlautbarungsjournalismus”, which reports news more or less as it is provided by official sources (Blum 2002: 73). Definitions of this kind often include the notion of investigative journalism as a non-mainstream practice, a radical form of journalism. Thus the circle of journalists involved in it is understood as rather limited. A concise approach is given by Robert W. Greene (1983, as quoted in Janisch 1997: 16), defining investigative journalism as follows:

It is the reporting through one’s own work product and initiative, matters of importance which some persons or organisations wish to keep secret. The three basic elements are that the investigation be the work of the reporter, not a report of an investigation made by someone else; that the subject of the story involves something of reasonable importance to the reader or viewer; and that others are attempting to hide these matters from the public.

Greene introduces a whole new perspective compared with the definitions above, namely that the matters of research are highly delicate for the persons or organisations under scrutiny so that they “wish to keep [them] secret”. In addition, Greene lists three defining characteristics: working on one’s own initiative, relevance of the matter, delicateness of the issue as described above.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bradlee was a former Executive Director with the Washington Post.

What needs to be added to Greene's definition is the answer to the question "why?". Why is a matter of relevance and even more so: Why is it kept secret? PCIJ (2004) gives a clear answer to the why-question: "[I]nvestigative reporting involves investigating *wrongdoing* [my emphasis] by individuals or institutions." Thus, a matter becomes relevant if something wrong is done. What exactly this means will further be discussed below.

Work strategies, such as "in-depth, long-term research" or "extensive interviewing" (PCIJ, 2004) are often included in definitions of investigative journalism. In fact, those are rather implications of the understanding of investigative journalism than defining aspects themselves. One aspect, though disputable whether it is an implication or a defining aspect, needs to be highlighted: illegal and ethically critical methods. Investigative journalism has become especially famous (and infamous) thanks to reporting methods such as undercover reporting<sup>3</sup>, surveillance, the use of hidden cameras and audiotapes or the publication of explosive internal documents. Those methods are the thin line on which investigative journalism might walk to success. Their role for the resisting potential of investigative journalism will be discussed in more detail later on.

So far, I have only focused on the question of what investigative journalism is and not what it does. Investigative journalism usually works along typical schemes, the understanding of which contributes significantly to the understanding of investigative journalism as a means of resistance. Janisch (1998: 20) gives a good abridgement of what investigative journalism does concretely by saying: "The heart of investigative journalism is the scandal". The aim of investigative journalism is to create a scandal. If it achieves to do so, it is effective. Janisch describes two stages that must be passed through in order for an issue to become a scandal. First, investigative journalism needs to expose the issue, it needs to unveil something of public interest. Secondly, it needs to be able to create public indignation; the public needs to be outraged about the issue. This is only possible when there is a "violation of moral (or legal) rules" (Janisch 1998: 20), which people would like to sanction and correct. What becomes apparent in this description of processes: News is not only verified through research but actually produced; Janisch (1998: 17) speaks of "herausgefundene Realität"<sup>4</sup>.

### **A Short History of Investigative Journalism**

Probably no other branch of journalism has been so closely associated with one particular affair in public perception than investigative journalism has with Watergate. The political scandal which eventually led to President Nixon's resignation in 1974 proved to be a milestone in

---

<sup>3</sup> The journalist best known for his undercover practice was Günther Wallraff. However, Nellie Bly (1864-1922) is said to be the pioneer of undercover reporting. (Wikipedia)

<sup>4</sup> Of course, such a practice needs justification. I will address this topic in the chapter on restraints to investigative journalism.

investigative journalism. It coined the term “investigative journalism”, which had only become fashionable some years before (Pilger 2004: xiv), in public discourse. Washington Post journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein made use of various investigative techniques in order to receive information on the backers behind and their motives for the burglary in the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee<sup>5</sup>. Thanks to their work the affair received wide public attention and grew to a veritable scandal. Public interest in their work and in investigative journalism in general was further excited by the involvement of the insider source “Deep Throat” who provided Woodward with sensible information and whose identity was kept secret<sup>6</sup>.

Nevertheless, the practice of what with Watergate became known under the label of “investigative journalism” had existed long before. Furthermore, Watergate was by far not the only outstanding achievement of investigative journalism in the past century<sup>7</sup>. Janisch (1997: 19) claims the practice to go back as far as 1721 when the New-England Courant published an article that challenged official opinions. Janisch distinguishes two eras of investigative journalism. The first being around 1900, when investigative articles were published in the United States, dealing with social injustice and labour conditions. It was when President Theodore Roosevelt coined the term “muckraker”<sup>8</sup> to denote investigative journalists.

The Vietnam War triggered the second era of investigative journalism, at the heyday of which the Watergate affair gained unprecedented public attention. It was at that time that “investigative journalism’ as a term became fashionable” (Pilger 2005: xiv) and that the practice established itself as a vital part of modern journalism.

### **3 TODAY’S MEDIA SOCIETY AND ITS EFFECTS.**

#### **Dependency on Media and Media concentration**

The role of investigative journalism is highly influenced by the environment in which it is embedded. This chapter will focus on the larger context within which investigative journalism op-

---

<sup>5</sup> More on their work can be found in the book „All The President’s Men“ they wrote after the affair.

<sup>6</sup> Since Watergate, there has been a lot of speculation on the identity of „Deep Throat“. Woodward had vowed not to unveil his identity until Deep Throat’s death. However, on May 31, 2005, former FBI Vice-President Mark Felt outed himself as the mysterious source.

<sup>7</sup> Pilger’s book „Tell Me No Lies“ is a good collection of famous works in investigative journalism.

<sup>8</sup> In a speech in 1906, Roosevelt said the following about the practice of “muckraking”: “There are, in the body politic, economic and social, many and grave evils, and there is urgent necessity for the sternest war upon them. There should be relentless exposure of and attack upon every evil man whether politician or business man, every evil practice, whether in politics, in business, or in social life.” (Andrews 1913, as quoted in Wikipedia.org 2005)

erates and will highlight how this context has changed in the past century. For this purpose, two developments or phenomena seem to be crucial. First, in recent times, media consumption in society has expanded considerably and the dependency on media accordingly. Secondly, there has been considerable media concentration, especially since the 1980s, which put the question of media ownership more into debate.

### *Dependency on Media*

Some key figures might well illustrate to what extent media have become part of people's lives all over the world, especially so, of course, in highly developed Western countries. In 2003, the average person of the German speaking part of Switzerland watched television for 141 minutes per day, listened to the radio for 111 minutes per day and read newspapers, magazines and books for 31 minutes every day (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2004). This sums up to 283 minutes, more than 4.5 hours. It is possible, though, that two or more of those media are consumed at the same time so that the total amount may be a little less. On the other hand, the rapidly increasing use of online media<sup>9</sup> is not registered in these statistics by the Bundesamt für Statistik.

Further interpretation of those figures must be left to media analysts and cannot be discussed any further here. Nevertheless, they are apt to give an impression of how dominant media have become in today's information age<sup>10</sup>.

The reasons for people's high media consumption may be manifold, one main reason certainly being that the media provide information that otherwise is not available to a person limited in space and time. We are interested in what happens around the globe and the media are – in the true sense of the word – the medium to bring the information into our households. Given the fact that people are highly interested in information and the media being the main channel to transport it, the media gain considerable power over the people, who, from their perspective, depend on the media. Bearing this in mind and being conscious of how media can shape people's perception of the world and their opinions, one needs to wonder who controls the media.

### *Media Concentration*

Ownership of media has undergone considerable changes in the past decades, mostly due to the general economic processes of globalisation. While in its beginnings, practically each

---

<sup>9</sup> In 2004, 54% of the Swiss population used the Internet at least several times per week, most of them daily (1997: 7%). More than half of those internet users use online media regularly. (Source: Bundesamt für Statistik)

<sup>10</sup> "The term [information age] applied to the period where movement of information became faster than physical movement, more narrowly applied to the late 20th century (post 1970)" (Wikipedia)

medium, be it a newspaper or a radio channel, was owned by a different investor, nowadays huge media corporations are in control of various media all over the world. The term 'media mogul' has been coined to describe the owners of such immense enterprises, which often not only engage in news-media, but are engaged in cross-media businesses as well.

Again, a few key figures are sufficient to illustrate the status quo of media concentration. 90 percent of all international news published by the world's press is produced by only four news agencies, all of them Western (Pilger 1992: 66, as quoted in Clark and Ivanic 1997: 33). In Australia, media mogul Rupert Murdoch controls 7 of the 12 principal newspapers and 7 of 10 Sunday newspapers (Pilger 2004: xix). Not as dramatic as in Australia, but quite significant, too, is the media concentration in the United Kingdom and in Switzerland. As McNair (1994: 10, as quoted in Clarke and Ivanic 1997: 33) notes, Murdoch owns "26 per cent of the press in the UK; 37 per cent of readership". Also in Switzerland, an increasing concentration of media ownership can be observed. All major daily newspapers published in the German speaking part of Switzerland, except the Basler Zeitung, are owned by three companies<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, those three media corporations own a large share of weekly magazines and the complete Sunday press in Switzerland and have their own television shows.

Currently, there is no reason to assume that this development will be stopped or even reversed. According to Pilger (2004: xxvii) "Rupert Murdoch predicted that [by 2007] there would be just three global media corporations". No wonder Pilger (2004: xix) comments: "Today, the medley [of competing voices] is in an Echo chamber". While he referred to the situation in Australia, his statement can well be generalised for today's media situation around the globe.

The effects of such media concentration are manifold. However, they can be condensed to the concept of "silencing". Although there have never been so many different media publications, the variety of opinions is highly restricted by media concentration. Alternative voices are silenced, information is channelled and filtered into mainstream information. Information outside the mainstream is silenced.

### **Silencing In and Through Media**

Silencing occurs in media in various forms, some being inevitable and inherent in the system, some being subconscious and unnoticed, some being intended and malicious. With regard to investigative journalism and its potential for resistance, particularly the latter is of interest. However, since all three aspects are intertwined in the same system, they are discussed as a whole, emphasising the aspect of intentional and malicious silencing.

---

<sup>11</sup> Tagesanzeiger and 20 Minuten are owned by Tamedia; Blick is owned by Ringer; Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Der Bund, Neue Luzerner Zeitung and St.Galler Tagblatt are owned by the NZZ Group.

In general, the successful transmission of news from its source via the media to the public depends on three criteria. Unless all of them apply, the news is not transmitted. First, the media need to take notice of the news. Secondly, the media need to consider the news relevant<sup>12</sup>. Finally, the media need to consider the news appropriate for publication<sup>13</sup>. The first gate<sup>14</sup> does not appear specifically problematic. It is evident, that not everything that happens in the world can be taken notice of. However, to a certain extent media can influence the probability of catching up news, by building up networks of correspondents and informants. How they arrange this network, both geographically and within social classes, is already biased by their evaluation of what is important and what not. The same criteria that are important at the second gate are already a precondition for taking notice of news.

Ideological bias and the possibilities of intentional silencing become visible at the second gate where selection according to relevance of news takes place. Here, journalists make choices according to their own views. An ideal journalist will of course try to minimise the impact of his<sup>15</sup> subjective views and preferences. In reality, however, journalists and especially editors set their own agendas rather than merely depicting and commenting on current news.<sup>16</sup> The undoubtedly highest influence comes from media owners. They define the underlying ideological orientation of a medium and ensure its compliance by selecting suitable editors for their medium. This influence becomes even more apparent at the third and final gate before publication: the appropriateness check. Even if a medium takes notice of news and considers it relevant, it might not publish it due to inappropriateness. Inappropriateness can result from various reasons, ranging from ethical or commercial to political and ideological. Here again, editors and owners draw a clear line as to what to publish and what not, or what to publish in understated form respectively<sup>17</sup>. A classic example of “restrictive gatekeeping” is wartime coverage (Watson 1998: 112). Thus, as Ramonet (2005) comments,

---

<sup>12</sup> The question of relevance is addressed by media science, the most prominent approach being the News Value Theory (Galtung and Ruge 1965, as quoted in Blum 2002: 21).

<sup>13</sup> One might argue in favour of a fourth criterion: The availability of space/broadcasting time in the medium. However, in a time where all major media have an online news section, where space is not limited, this criterion can be left out of consideration for the purpose of this paper.

<sup>14</sup> I am using White's (1950) terminology here. Watson (1998: 108) comments: „Gatekeeping is about opening and closing the channels of communication. It is about accessing or refusing access“.

<sup>15</sup> A short note on the gender issue: Whenever possible without interrupting the flow of reading, I have used both the male and female form. When not possible, I have chosen the male form to refer to both genders.

<sup>16</sup> This aspect is addressed by news-bias research, which identifies the personal factors of journalists that influence them in their selection of news. (Klein and Maccobby 1954 as quoted in Blum 2002: 19)

<sup>17</sup> Pilger (2004: xxvi) himself criticises with particular respect to the use of euphemisms as a means of filtering: “When journalists allow this corruption of language and ideas, they disorientate, not inform [...] they ‘normalise the unthinkable for the general public’”.

in the preparation phase to the war in Iraq, most American media have strongly supported the official version claiming Iraq to be a massive threat to Western civilisation. Those media certainly took notice of facts that hinted to the contrary and must have considered them relevant. However, they considered them not appropriate for publication. The same holds true for coverage during the war itself where journalists were literally embedded in the “official” version of the war.

This example illustrates well how silencing links up with the phenomenon discussed above: media concentration. The more media belong to the same transnational media corporations, the less divergent voices are possible and the easier silencing occurs. Thus Clark rightly says that “media play an active part in consensus formation” (27) and “play a central role in constructing and maintaining hegemony” (219).

To sum up, two processes lead to silencing: channelling (resulting from the limited means to take notice of news) and filtering of news (consisting of checking news for relevance and appropriateness). This is probably what George Orwell (Unpublished preface to “Animal Farm”, as quoted in Pilger 2004, xvii) had in mind when we spoke of censorship in free societies: “Unpopular ideas can be silenced and inconvenient facts kept dark, without any need for an official ban.”

--- *Enter Investigative Journalism.*

#### **4 INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE.**

When one claims investigative journalism to be a means of resistance, which I obviously do, then the first question must be: resistance against whom or what? I will argue that the resistance is twofold, aimed against two opponents. Using criminological language, one could say the resistance of investigative journalism is aimed at both delinquents and accomplices.

##### **Resistance Against Delinquents**

What I call the delinquents are the direct subjects of investigative journalism’s criticism, those people and institutions under scrutiny. Possible delinquents thus are politicians, transnational corporations, states, insurance companies, chemical industry and so forth. Whenever someone, be it a single person or a person representing a larger entity, behaves in a way

Investigative journalism resists delinquents by exposing their wrongdoing and by making the public aware of it. Thus, if successful, it creates public pressure against the practice in dispute by scandalising it. Sticking to legal vocabulary, the first aim of investigative journalism in resisting against delinquents is bringing them to court, i.e. bringing them before the judges of the public. If the investigative journalist provides enough and convincing materi-

al to prove the delinquents' wrongdoing, a conviction by the public can result. Again, the conviction can have various forms, be it a boycott, a rebellion or a legal conviction.

### **Resistance Against Accomplices**

Of course, delinquents seldom act alone. Usually, they have a number of powerful accomplices, against which the resistance of investigative journalism is directed as well. What is meant here by accomplices are not those people or institutions that help the delinquent to commit his crime (I would subsume them under delinquents, as well), but those who help to cover it: the media. As described above, the media have several possibilities to silence issues and may have several motives to do so. Bearing in mind the role that the media play in forming opinions nowadays, the role of media as possible accomplices of wrongdoers becomes apparent.

A good example to show how the distinction in delinquents and accomplices works in practice is wartime journalism. Delinquents are, say, soldiers who attack civilians for no reason whatsoever. Accomplices are those media which do not report it in order to preserve the image of a just and clean war.<sup>19</sup>

### **De-Silencing**

By making information about wrongdoing available to the wide public, investigative journalism thus resists two opponents. Pilger (2004: xvi) defines the role of investigative journalism as one of a tool for people to be able to resist: "Why is journalism like this so important? Without it, our sense of injustice would lose its vocabulary and people would not be armed with the information they need to fight it". In order to provide people with the required information, investigative journalism needs to undo the silencing, it needs to de-silence.

To do so investigative journalism needs to go back to a point before the channelling and filtering of news. By searching for important data which has been neglected by mainstream media, investigative journalism can come up with new interpretations and create new opinions that oppose mainstream opinions or emphasise interpretations that have been silenced by mainstream coverage. It can offer new perspectives on a specific issue or person. It goes beyond normal coverage and thus provides new information that might allow people to resist. As both journalist and wrongdoers know about those possibilities (that could prove to be a threat for the wrongdoer), investigative research without even a publication of it can work as resistance and cause its desired effects. It then works as a means of pressure, sometimes even similar to blackmailing.

---

<sup>19</sup> What can be achieved by investigative journalism, if it is persistent enough, is shown by Ramonet (2005) who comments: „Viele Leute haben erkannt, dass die Medien lügen, täuschen und manipulieren“

## **Restraints to Work and Effects of Investigative Journalism**

The task to resist is not a simple one for investigative journalism; it has to cope with various restraints that make its work more difficult, sometimes nearly impossible, or that limit its effects. Those restraints can be found on various levels and are imposed by various actors. Speaking about investigative journalism as a means of resistance, it is equally important to make clear where its limits as such are.

The restraints to investigative journalism can in general be divided into two subcategories: restraints inherent in investigative journalism as a journalistic practice on one hand, restraints imposed from outside on the other, with some restraints lying halfway in-between<sup>20</sup>.

### *Restraints Inherent in (Investigative) Journalism*

Restraints inherent in investigative journalism concern the work of an investigative journalist itself and its embedding in the media system. Every investigative journalist needs to impose ethical norms on his work. Especially when investigative journalism gains access to information by using illegal or immoral means, the question of ethics must be discussed. Such means include the reliance on unnamed sources, the use of hidden cameras and microphones, paying informers or misidentification of the reporter (undercover reporting being an extreme example of this) (Lambeth 1986: 120). In such cases, it is disputable whether the ends really justify the means. Referring to similar means used by Woodward and Bernstein in the Watergate affair, Bok (1979: 128, as quoted in Lambeth 1986: 126) criticises: “[W]hat is more troubling than the lies themselves is the absence of any acknowledgement of a moral dilemma”. A statement like this one highlights the need for investigative journalists to be aware of the ethical borderline along which they are working.

Another restraint to investigative journalism as a means of honest resistance is the possibility of false motivation. Ever since has investigative journalism had a flashy image and from Watergate on at the latest, investigative journalists were considered an exceptional species among journalists (as already touched upon in the introduction). Thus, not only a sense for justice and an interest in uncovered truth can be a motivation to engage oneself in investigative journalism, but striving for glory and mere egotism. When the reporter becomes more important than the story, then the story is very likely to lose its potential to offer resistance.

A pretty obvious restraint to any investigative journalist is that investigative research takes a lot of time and is expensive. Thus, for an investigative journalist to be able to pursue his goals insistently and work towards substantial resistance, he needs to be granted enough time and financial support, either by his employer or an organisation he is associated with. In

---

<sup>20</sup> Of course, a more refined distinction is possible and demanded if a more media-scientific approach is intended (see e.g. Maletzke’s „model of the mass communication process“, 1963 as reprinted in Watson 1998: 154). For this paper, though, the chosen distinction seems sufficient.

a time where pressure of time and costs is omnipresent, this makes investigative journalism especially delicate. Palast (2003 as quoted in Pilger 2004: 469) illustrates well how the pursuit of a story depended solely on money and that it could well have been dropped for exactly that reason: "Finding the answer would not be cheap for Salon. It meant big bucks".

Above, I have discussed the problem of channelling and filtering of news and the possibilities of investigative journalism to work against those mechanisms. However, investigative journalism itself is likely to become a subject of channelling and filtering. This is especially the case when investigative journalism is practised in mass media. It is then that the aims of silencing and de-silencing may enter in conflict. An investigative journalist then often faces the dilemma whether to make his work fit the requirements of the mass medium and its audience or readership respectively or to insist on the original version of the story at the risk of the story not being published at all. The former guarantees and strong impact due to the larger number of people that are reached, the latter is more true to the facts, but then fails to reach a large audience and for that does not manage to unfold its potential to resist.

In the ideal case, it is possible to both be absolutely exact and publish in a mass medium, as Watergate has shown. In this case, the impact and the potential for resistance is maximal. There are, however, a lot of cases where the resisting potential of a story remains latent because mass media do not publish the story, or just in understated form, as the example of Greg Palast's (2003) work on the presidential election in the United States in 2000 shows. Here, we enter a domain where restraints are not inherent in journalism as a system and mostly inevitable, but where restraints are imposed from outside. The reason why mass media do not publish certain stories often lies in their dependence on other businesses as already described above.

### *Restraints from Outside*

There are, however, some much more obvious restraints to investigative journalism and its potential to resist. As investigative journalism often attacks and resists rather powerful organisations, the journalists are exposed to counter strategies of those under attack to silence them. In 2005, up to the end of September, 38 journalists have been killed world-wide according to the Committee to Protect Journalist (CPJ). In the last decade, 341 journalists were killed<sup>21</sup>, with CPJ specifying "only [...] 20 percent died in cross fire, while [...] 72 percent were murdered often in reprisal for their reporting". In this decade, already 209 deaths of journalists on duty are confirmed by CPJ. In addition, there are countless violent assaults against journalists, including torture. Watson (1998: 158) makes the pointed remark: "Reporters and

---

<sup>21</sup> Watson (1998: 158) reports that from 1990 to 1997, "more than 500 journalist were killed on duty". The difference between the two calculations is likely to be due to the stricter standards applied by CPJ, who only count confirmed deaths. The number given by Watson, though, sounds realistic.

photographers risk bullets, beatings-up, imprisonment, sometimes torture, to bring news to a nation's breakfast table".

But journalists are put under pressure during their work not only by illegal means. Restraints can well be established in political and legal systems. This is especially the case when freedom of press is limited. As I am not an expert in legal affairs and this is not a juristic paper, I will only briefly touch on two instances that affect the work of investigative journalists. The availability of information from official sources can be limited by laws and/or political action, making research more difficult. Secondly, if journalists are not granted the right to keep their sources secret or draconian penalties are pronounced for undercover reporting and similar techniques, then investigative journalists and their informants are likely to be discouraged from reporting.

Finally, also the society in which investigative journalism is published and intended to have its effects is a possible source for restraints to the work of investigative journalists and even more so to the effects of it. When I have spoken of the ethical norms that every investigative journalist needs to impose on his work, this was only one part of a whole. The society within which the journalist works imposes ethical norms, as well. Only if they are respected can a journalist count on public support in his denouncement of wrongdoing. In a nutshell: If the journalist's break of norms (e.g. by intrusion into privacy) is seen as more severe than the one exposed by the journalist, his work will not be accepted.

This description of restraints to work and effects of investigative journalism might not be exhaustive. Nevertheless, it shows how manifold the restraints are. If one is to consider the resisting potential of investigative journalism, one needs to be very well aware of those. Investigative journalism, of course, has developed counter strategies to resist or weaken those restraints, especially the ones imposed from outside the system. As already mentioned above, associations of investigative journalists are one means to do so<sup>22</sup>. To form organisations has always been an effective tool to offer resistance. In this case, those organisations can provide financial backup for the work of their investigative journalists or make use of synergies. And, of course, an organisation is stronger than an individual journalist and thus more likely to resist the exertion of influence from powerful delinquents who are under scrutiny from investigative journalists.

### **The Twofold Character of Resistance**

When I have spoken of investigative journalism as a means of resistance, I have so far focussed on the concept as such, i.e. as a journalistic practice that can provide the basis for

---

<sup>22</sup> A list of present associations of investigative journalists can be found on [www.globalinvestigative-journalism.org/resources/organizations.html](http://www.globalinvestigative-journalism.org/resources/organizations.html)

resistance. However, speaking of the potential of investigative journalism to resist does also need to take into consideration the language it uses. Language is a very powerful medium and investigative journalism would not be that influential a means of resistance if it did not use the particular language it uses. In the following chapter I will therefore try to analyse the language of investigative journalism with its specific linguistic features. For this case study, I will use one piece of writing that I consider exemplary of investigative journalism.

## **5 CASE STUDY.**

### **Notes on the Choice of Text**

As the various definitions of investigative journalism above suggest, finding a text exemplary of investigative journalism is not that easy a task. There are, however, a few journalists whose writing can rather safely be considered exemplary of investigative journalism. Greg Palast is one of them. The Tribune Magazine (as quoted on [gregpalast.com](http://gregpalast.com)) once called him "The greatest investigative reporter of our time". And John Pilger (2004: 465), an outstanding journalist himself, from whose book the article by Palast to be discussed is taken, introduces him as follows: "If a 'scoop' is the true measure of a reporter, then Greg Palast is one of the best."

The text by Palast<sup>23</sup> deals with the presidential election in the United States in 2000. Palast exposes how George W. Bush "stole the presidency" by unveiling massive irregularities in the balloting in Florida, where voters were systematically and unjustly excluded from the vote. The text was first published in bookform in 2003 (as part of Palast's book "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy") and re-published in Pilger's collection of great works in investigative journalism in 2004. However, parts of Palast's text were already published as newspaper articles during the election process. The text displays all characteristics of investigative journalism as mentioned above. What makes the text even more apt for an analysis is the fact that it unites excerpts from different media (book, newspaper, online magazine), from different countries (some articles were published in Britain, some in the United States) and from different times (during and after the election process). Thus, it provides an ideal basis for an analysis of the particular language of investigative journalism.

### **Notes on the Methodology**

The approach chosen for this case study is Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 258), "CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of social practice". They argue that the relationship between discourse and social reality is a dialectical one: "discourse is socially constitutive as well as

---

<sup>23</sup> „How to Steal the Presidency and Get Away with It“ (2003, re-printed in Pilger 2004: 465-481), see Appendix I for a copy of the entire text.

socially shaped". They specify: "It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it". Thus, language is presented as a powerful tool both to resist and to resist resistance, i.e. to maintain power relations. The ideas and concepts transported in discourse – Teo (2000) calls them "ideological underpinnings" – are often concealed, either consciously or unconsciously. Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 275) recommend that "[a] useful working assumption is that any part of any language text, spoken or written, is simultaneously constituting representations, relations and identities." The aim of CDA then is to identify and interpret them.

Fairclough (2001: 93) distinguishes between "three types of value" that linguistic features may have. The "experiential value" indicates how the producer of the text sees "the natural or social world". The "relational value" concerns "social relationships" between different actors and their representation in a text. Hints to how the text producer evaluates "the bit of reality" he describes are given by the expressive value of linguistic features. In addition, some features may have "connective value" when they serve to connect parts of the text. Fairclough (2001: 92f) gives a list of questions (see Appendix II) that help to identify those values in vocabulary, grammatical features and larger textual structures. However, already in his theory, Fairclough does not manage to set those three types of value clearly apart. In practice even more so, it becomes apparent that a clear-cut distinction is neither possible nor useful. Especially as far as vocabulary is concerned, the types of value often overlap. Just to give one example, the representation of reality (experiential value) usually implies an evaluation of it (expressive value).

By and large, nevertheless, Fairclough's (2001: 92f) list provides a good tool for a critical analysis of the linguistic features of a text. The findings presented in the next chapter are the results of a Critical Discourse Analysis of Greg Palast's text along Fairclough's list of questions.

## **Analysis**

In this chapter, I will present my analysis of Greg Palast's text. It is intended to give an insight into the linguistic particularities of investigative journalism. I have focused on three passages in the text: Palast's introduction to the chapter (466-468), an article Palast wrote for the American online magazine Salon.com (470-471) and an article Palast wrote for the British daily newspaper The Observer (472-474). As mentioned above, those three excerpts display a large variety of input variables with regard to the context in which they were written. However, any cross-comparisons between, say, investigative journalism written during the affair as compared to after it, are not the aim of this analysis. Neither is the comparison of a text of investigative journalism with other text forms. The aim of this analysis explicitly is a very close look at the linguistics of investigative journalism. The binocular used for this purpose is CDA.

Having examined the three excerpts mentioned above, I have come up with the following findings.

### *Identification of Victims and Offenders*

The central issue of Palast's text is the identification and evaluation of victims and offenders. It is also the one issue, in which Palast makes use of the full range of linguistic means and thereby achieves the most powerful effect. As CDA is concerned, a variety of aspects can be considered, such as the three values in vocabulary, metaphors, the question of agency, or active versus passive sentence constructions.

"Every time I cut open another alligator, I find the bones of more Gore voters" (472, 1-2). Palast's introduction to his article in *The Observer* displays some fine metaphoric language. The intended associations are clear: Voters were killed by a voracious beast, Palast kills the beast and uncovers the victims<sup>24</sup>. Thus, with one metaphoric sentence, a lot is already suggested: There is an offender, cruel and dangerous like an alligator, well hidden from the public eye in a swamp; there are victims of which only the bones remain; and there is a hero, who restores the dignity of the victims<sup>25</sup>.

Metaphor, albeit a very strong and effective means, is by far not the only way in which Palast uses vocabulary to clearly identify victims and offenders.

Looking at the experiential values of his vocabulary, it is striking that Palast uses the vocabulary of crime-context. This context is already established in the title: "How to *Steal* the Presidency and *Get Away* with It" (466, my emphases). The association is upheld throughout the entire text.

criminal scum, bad guy (467, 16)<sup>26</sup>

hit list (467, 17)

smart little black-box operation (467, 28)

theft (467, 32)

time-travelling bandits (467, 56)

accused (470, 16)

elimination (472, 10)

accused of crimes (472, 29)

impose this penalty (473, 40)

---

<sup>24</sup> Interestingly enough, Palast also implies with his metaphor that all he can do is find „dead voters“, with no hope of reviving them. Which is astonishing as the race for the presidency was not yet decided when the article was published.

<sup>25</sup> This aspect, Palast as a hero, will be taken up again in the chapter „Representation of Media and Journalists“

<sup>26</sup> Numbers indicate the page number and the line number of the respective excerpt. See Appendix I.

Of course, given the topic, this vocabulary is not particularly striking. However, Palast manages to create a shift in interpretation away from the voters as criminals (accused of felony) to the Republican state officials as criminals (accused by Palast of voter fraud).

An even stronger association is created by comparing what has happened to voters in Florida to an “ethnic cleansing” as in the title of Palast’s Salon.com article (470), taken up again later in the text only as “cleansing” (470, 22). The severity of the incident is underlined by this choice of vocabulary.

When “expressive values” (Fairclough 2001: 93) are concerned, Palast is more explicit. In numerous instances, he points out that (deliberate) errors have led to the exclusion of certain voters – by using a whole range of nouns and adjectives to describe the errors. All words listed below are to be found in just 268 lines of text analysed, almost exclusively referring to the dubious list on the basis of which voters were excluded from the ballot.

mistake (468, 77; 78; 81; 85; 472, 14)

one heck of a mistake (468, 77)

error (470, 14; 472, 18; 20)

large number of errors (470, 18)

high level of errors (471, 44)

mess (471, 56)

wrongly (467, 26; 50; 468, 65)

flaw-ridden (470, 7)

falsely (470, 16)

incorrectly (471, 45)

so flawed (471, 60)

wasn’t so correct (472, 26)

dead-wrong (473, 68)

uncorrected (473, 68)

faulty (474, 94)

unreliable (471, 39)

notorious (474, 77)

So far I have shown how Palast manages to make clear, that (a) something has gone wrong, (b) that it was a criminal act and (c) that it was a severe case. But not enough with that, Palast also has the vocabulary to show that one group actively took action against another and that the other underwent unfair treatment.

What Florida state officials do: They...

order [...] to purge (466, 13)

disenfranchise [...] voters (467, 38)  
tried to purge [...] voters (467, 47)  
scrub [voters] (470, 10)  
ordered the elimination of [...] voters (472, 10)  
chose the president for Amercia's voters (474, 82)  
make little – or no – effort at all to alert the 'purged voters' (471, 42)  
are *quite* [my emphasis] apologetic (471, 59)

What happens to the alleged felons: They are...

erased (466, 2)  
targeted (466, 3 and several more instances)  
targeted to lose their civil rights (466, 21)  
targeted to be knocked off (470, 3)  
barred from voting (467, 50)  
removed from voter rolls (468, 77)  
accused (470, 16)  
turned away at the polls (470, 19)  
unfairly singled out (470, 35)  
accused of crimes (472, 29)  
stripped of their citizenship rights (472, 29)

All this happens to those people without any justification. They are, as Palast once writes explicitly (472, 28), "innocent people" and – in a metaphorical description – "have remained on the good side of the law" (473, 37).

What already becomes evident in the vocabulary, namely that some people are targeted by others and treated unfairly, is reinforced by the grammatical structures of sentences. In most cases, the cheated voters appear in a passive construction, whereas state officials are often the subject of an active sentence structure. Grammatical activeness or passiveness respectively represents real activeness and passiveness. Palast is rather consistent in his use of active and passive constructions, as can be seen with the above examples; mere coincidence can thus clearly be excluded.

A similar argument can be made with regard to the question of agency. The situation here is a bit more complex, though. What one might expect to find in investigative journalism is that agency is always made explicit, thus making visible who are the agents behind wrongdoing. A good example in support of this assumption would be the following: "In the months leading up to the November 2000 balloting, *Florida Secretary of State Harris*, in coordination with *Governor Jeb Bush*, ordered local elections supervisors to purge these

57,700 from voter registries” (466, 11-14, my emphases). Agency is as explicit as it can possibly be. The agent is presented with name and precise function and in addition to that, a co-agent is presented in the same way.

In a majority of the cases, a structure like the one just mentioned is used, clearly identifying the agent of the action, usually an action targeted against the purported felons. However, there are some interesting exceptions to it. In the Observer article, there is one sentence which displays three instances of agency camouflage: “On 26 November, we reported that the Florida Secretary of State’s *office* had, before the election, ordered the *elimination* of 8,000 Florida voters [...]” (472, 9-11, my emphases). What is particularly interesting with this example, is that the agents are not omitted but yet concealed. First, the subject of the main clause is not actually the agent of the action of interest, but “we”, referring to The Observer. The agent is thus somewhat hidden in the subordinate clause. Secondly, the agent is not a person like in the example above, but an entity, namely an “office”. Obviously, Secretary of State Harris was involved here, too, but remains hidden behind the abstract entity of her office. Finally, the nominalisation “elimination” conceals an agent as well; someone did eliminate those voters, but who exactly? The answer to this question is avoided by the use of a nominalisation.

Another way of concealing agents – although, of course, this should not be the aim of an investigative journalist – is the use of inanimate agents. Examples are “the list [...] targets a minority population [...]” (470, 32) or “they were targeted by some kind of racial computer program” (466, 3). The latter example is the second part of a sentence, in the first part of which the agent is completely absent: “there were so many stories of African-Americans erased from voter rolls [...]”.

It can only be guessed why Palast remains so imprecise in these instances. The most likely explanation seems to be, that he has a good reason to do so. This could be, in the example with the threefold agent camouflage, that he refers to an article published before and thus presupposes that his readers are already well informed. In the latter example, it could be that he intends to build some tension, which will then be resolved in the subsequent paragraph. However, one should not exclude the possibility that even an excellent writer like Palast might have one weak moment in a text.

### *Interaction with the Reader*

Palast makes use of a common pattern: People are more likely to trust those who are close to them. Palast thus writes in a way that brings the reader in close interaction with himself. He does so by very simple grammatical means that can be identified by focusing on the relational values of grammatical features.

Palast makes frequent use of first person pronouns, exposing himself to the reader, being readily available as an author. On the other hand, it gives him the authority to “tell the

story”, thus making an authenticity claim for himself. In the 268 lines of text analysed, I counted no less than 43 occurrences of first person pronouns referring directly to Palast – either to only himself or to him as part of a group. This group can include the reader when the “inclusive we” is used. The inclusive we is a very effective means to establish bonds between author and reader. A typical example of this is “That will bring *us* [my emphasis] to the Big Question” (467, 53), where “us” means “we, the critical people”, including both Palast and his readers. Similar usage of “we” are found in “[...] we find<sup>27</sup> hundreds more convicts” (473, 44)

In addition, Palast addresses his readers directly; be it with second person pronouns, imperatives or questions. They all serve the purpose of maintaining reader attention, intensifying the effects of his writing and establishing a personal relationship.

“You may suspect something’s wrong with the list. You’d be right.” (466, 20)

“[...] you’d think that an American journalist would pick up the story. Don’t hold your breath.” (468, 78-79)

Compare the first sentence to the possible alternative wording: “Something seems to be wrong with the list. And indeed, there is.” The wording chosen by Palast makes the sentence more lively and, by involving the reader in the argument, makes it more convincing. A special case of direct address is the introduction to the Observer article: “Hey, Al, take a look at this” (472, 1). This imperative, although seemingly Al Gore is addressed, serves as an indirect, however very obvious, address to the reader, who is expected to identify with Al Gore. Other imperatives are directly addressed to the reader, ensuring he follows the argument attentively.

“Now do the arithmetic.” (467, 25-26)

“Add it up.” (473, 68)

Questions are no real questions to the reader. Usually, they are either rhetoric questions, suggestive ones or questions that Palast uses to let the reader take part in the investigation; Palast asks questions that could be questions of mindful readers.

“Was this some off-the-wall story that the British press misreported?” (467, 36)

“[W]as it deliberate, this purge so fortunate for the Republicans? Or just an honest clerical error? (467, 53-54)

“[...] why were these citizens barred from the polls?”

---

<sup>27</sup> The present tense used here, in contrast to the preceding paragraph, indicates that Palast now invites the reader to take part in his research.

Finally, Palast also uses attributes that he gives to himself as a means to present himself as close to the reader<sup>28</sup>. He describes himself once as a “Southern California ho’daddy [...] with his wife and kiddies” (467, 41-42) and later on as “a product of Los Angeles school system, where I Pledged my Allegiance to the Flag every morning” (467, 63-64). In both examples, Palast presents himself as an ordinary American – like any reader – who is interested in what was going on with the elections.

### *Representation of Actors*

Throughout the text, in all three excerpts, Palast is seldom neutral in his presentation of actors. It is generally in the expressive and experiential values of vocabulary that clues about Palast’s evaluation of actors can be found. One issue that needs to be touched upon here is the power of naming, or in a broader description: the power of representation; whoever is able to give names to others, has the power to define them in one or another way. Hall (2001: 338) wrote of the “power to represent someone or something in a certain way – within a certain ‘regime of representation’”. Naming thus is a concept that must not be underestimated when the evaluation of actors is considered. Referring to his sources, Palast uses positive attributes to underline their trustworthiness and the power of their quotes.

the Harvard law professor, a renowned authority (473, 48)

America’s top expert (473, 54)

the chief lawyer (467, 37)

San Francisco-based expert (474, 95)

Florida state officials and other people involved in the voter fraud are presented with less favourable attributes. Not a single positive attribute for them can be found in Palast’s text. They are either introduced and referred to in a formal way, as in the two following examples.

Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris (466, 6)

Governor Jeb Bush (466, 13)

In most instances, however, there is at least a slight linguistic depreciation. The examples below illustrate how Palast depicts them as a mighty group of people with tight bonds and dubious connections.

Florida’s Republican rulers (473, 52)

Republican operatives (468, 66)

a private firm with tight Republican ties (470, 8)

---

<sup>28</sup> The issue of „naming“ will be discussed in further detail the the next chapter.

Florida Governor Jeb Bush and his brother<sup>29</sup> (472, 13)  
the Harris crew (467, 47), Harris's crew (474, 102)  
Big Brother powers (474, 106)

The group most often mentioned, however, are the victims. Palast's naming for them can be categorised in three implicit statements. First, Palast makes clear that they are citizens with a right to vote, as is implied in the examples below:

Florida citizens (466, 11)  
attempted voter (466, 17)  
eligible voters (470, 19)  
Florida voters (472, 11)  
citizens (472, 47)

Secondly, Palast uses attributes to identify them as part of a specific ethnic group, more precisely: a minority. The reader who is already informed that those people have become victims (as discussed in the chapter „Identification of Victims and Offenders) will thus be inclined to think that those people were made victims precisely because of their ethnical background.

minority population (470, 32), Minorities (470, 35)  
African-Americans (466, 2; 471, 36; 472, 6; 472, 15; 473, 61)  
Blacks (467, 27), Florida's black voters (467, 39), BLACK (sic!; 468, 90)  
Black men (470, 33), Black voters (473, 58), Black folk (473, 62), Black people (473, 64)  
Black and Hispanic voters (466, 23), Blacks and Hispanics (467, 51)  
Hispanics (472, 16)  
poor white folk (472, 16)  
poor (473, 67)

In this respect, two very strong wordplays must be mentioned. Both play with the word “black” which is very dominant in the text to denote the victims as the examples above approve. Referring to the cheating in the ballots, Palast (467, 28) speaks of a “smart little black-box operation”. Literally, “black-box” means that it is unclear and dubious what exactly has happened and how it has worked. In the given context, however, one must read into this wording that the operation had to do with black people, not to say: it was targeted against them. An even stronger and more explicit play on words is the title of Palast's Observer article (472): “A Blacklist Burning for Bush”. The fixed expression “blacklist” in this context gains

---

<sup>29</sup> „His brother“ refers to George W. Bush, which is why Jeb Bush is later in the text once referred to as Frist Brother (475).

an additional meaning as most people on the blacklist are black, making the blacklist a list of blacks.

Finally, Palast denotes the minority citizens in such a way as to make clear on which political side they are.

Democrats (466, 23; 467, 52; 474, 93)  
solid Democratic voters (473, 67)  
Gore voters (472, 2)  
likely voters for Vice-President Gore (472, 17)

### *Representation of Media and Journalists*

Another interesting aspect in Palast's text is how he depicts himself as a journalist as well as other journalists and media. It is fairly apparent how Palast shows off his own work and that of his colleagues on the one hand, and criticises other, mainly American mainstream media on the other. This perfectly links up with two statements made above: Investigative journalism is a branch of journalism where people like to profile themselves; and the media as accomplices of evildoers are often under scrutiny of investigative journalists.

Again metaphors and naming are two strong means Palast uses to discredit and to criticise those media who have not reported on the issue critically enough or not at all. He calls them "Florida press puppies" (468, 83) and suggests that they "stood on their hind legs and swallowed a biscuit of bullshit" (486, 84), comparing them to puppies and dogs<sup>30</sup>.

When he writes about American newspapers not reporting on the incidents, he attacks them in a fairly direct manner: "So why was this story investigated, reported and broadcast only in *Europe*, for God's sake?" (467, 39-40). By using the form of a question – above all reinforced by the exclamation "for God's sake?" – he makes his accusation especially strong, claiming himself to be the voice of outraged readers, who must have been wondering about this when reading this particular paragraph.

Also for describing himself, he has metaphors at hand – but positive ones: He was "peeling the Florida elections onion" (467, 49-50), he takes the reader "along the path of investigation" (467, 44), he "hack[s] [his] way through the Florida swampland" (472, 3) and cuts open alligators (472, 1-2). The investigative journalist as both Sherlock Holmes and Hercules, critical detective and hero.

---

<sup>30</sup> On a grammatical level, however, Palast is more mild. When he writes „the story was simply not covered in American newspapers (467, 32), he leaves agency open. He could have been far more direct and accusing by writing „Editors of American newspapers did not cover the story“ or something similar. The same holds for „News coverage has focused...“ (471, 46)

Referring to those media who are on his side, he is distinctively sympathetic. He speaks of “my BBC researchers” (467, 27) who have made an “extraordinary discovery” (467, 29). He speaks of the “*researcher* Solomon Hughes” (468, 73) and of his “team of *re-searchers*” (472, 25), compared to the slightly depreciating reference to other journalists as “a couple of curious *reporters*” (468, 80).

### *Reversal of Assumptions*

Investigative journalism is always about reversing prevailing assumptions. Usually, before an issue is raised, the (unconscious) assumption is that there is no issue or that the issue does not violate accepted norms. In Palast’s case, the assumption was that the election process in Florida was fair. Palast makes an effort to reverse and disprove it. He does so by highlighting new aspects, choosing a divergent wording, re-evaluating by giving names and attributes, in short: all that has been discussed so far. A very effective means, however, has not yet been mentioned. Palast creates new underlying assumptions, which is best done by the use of presuppositions. An excellent example of this is displayed in the first sentence of Palast’s article in Salon.com: „If Vice-President Al Gore is wondering where his Florida votes went...” (470, 1-2). His introduction presupposes, that Gore’s Florida votes went *somewhere*; “somewhere” not being the place where they should.

### **Summarised Findings of the Case Study**

The case study has produced two intriguing findings: one from a methodological perspective, one concerning Palast’s writing. Critical Discourse Analysis has proved itself to be an excellent methodological approach to the issue. It has managed to identify and interpret the particularities of Palast’s writing as an example of investigative journalism. The list of questions provided by Fairclough (2001: 91f) is an excellent tool to analyse both features related to vocabulary and grammar.

Secondly, the case study has made visible, how well Palast works with language. As a journalist, even more so as an investigative journalist, he is well aware that language is not just a medium to transport content, but a tool to trigger certain interpretations. Even though the case study was focused on merely 268 lines of text, the full range of linguistic means to shape discourse is on display. This is no coincidence. CDA shows how skilfully and deliberately Palast uses language. Palast makes use of it systematically and consistently. There are hardly any deviances from this line which is – apart from the topic addressed and the potency of the facts – one main reason why the text is so convincing. This in turn is a necessary condition for Palast to achieve his aims: Only when he convinces his readers can he provoke a desired reaction. And only when a reaction is provoked can the text work as a basis for resistance.

## **6 CONCLUSION.**

Investigative journalism is a means of resistance; one that can be learned by a journalist and analysed by a linguist: Those are the claims I made in the introduction to this paper. In the paper, I have shown what investigative journalism is, why it is needed today, how it works as a means of resistance and what possibilities and limits there are to it as a means of resistance. Most importantly I have shown that investigative journalism uses a very specific language which makes resistance through language possible.

This language has two very important aspects to it, which I would like to mention as a conclusion to this paper. On the one hand, the language of investigative journalism is very explicit, thus speaking out information that otherwise is kept silent. On the other, it is very subtle, introducing new ideas in such a way as they enter the readers' minds unnoticed. Both aspects have a strong impact: Making things explicit draws people's attention to it and causes outrage. Transporting ideas in a concealed form changes attitudes and contests prevailing concepts. Both aspects together help to construct new realities – which is what investigative journalism intends to do and which is how investigative journalism offers resistance.

## REFERENCES.

- Andrews, Wayne (ed.)  
1913 *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, Condensed from the Original Edition, Supplemented by Letters, Speeches, and Other Writings. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958: 246-247.
- Blum, Roger  
2002 *Kommunikatorforschung und Journalistik: Skript zur Vorlesung*. (Unpublished)
- Bok, Sissela  
1979 *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Bundesamt für Statistik  
2004a *Indikatoren zur Informationsgesellschaft. Internetnutzung (Entwicklung)* [www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/systemes\\_d\\_indicateurs/indicateurs\\_de\\_la/approche\\_globale.indicator.30106.html?open=1#1](http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/systemes_d_indicateurs/indicateurs_de_la/approche_globale.indicator.30106.html?open=1#1) (accessed 23.9.05)
- 2004b *Indikatoren zur Informationsgesellschaft. Internetnutzung (Nutzungszweck)* [www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/systemes\\_d\\_indicateurs/indicateurs\\_de\\_la/approche\\_globale.indicator.30106.html?open=302#302](http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/systemes_d_indicateurs/indicateurs_de_la/approche_globale.indicator.30106.html?open=302#302) (accessed 23.9.05)
- Clark, Romy  
1997 Writing, Politics and Power. In Clark, Romy and Roz Ivanič, *The politics of writing*. London: Routledge, 20-42.
- Committee to Protect Journalists  
2005 [www.cpj.org/](http://www.cpj.org/) (accessed 25.9.05)
- Fairclough, Norman and Ruth Wodak  
1997 Critical Discourse Analysis. In Teun van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse as Social Interaction*. Vol. 2. London: SAGE, 258-284.
- Fairclough, Norman  
2001 *Language and Power*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Longman.
- Galtung, Johan and Marie Ruge  
1965 The structure of foreign news. *Journal of Peace Research*. 2, 74-91.
- Global Investigative Journalism  
2004 *Investigative Journalism Organizations*. [www.globalinvestigativejournalism.org/resources/organizations.html](http://www.globalinvestigativejournalism.org/resources/organizations.html) (accessed 24.9.2005)
- Greene, Robert W.  
1983 Foreword. In: *Investigative Reporters and Editors. The Reporter's Handbook*. New York.
- Hall, Stuart  
2001 The Spectacle of the 'Other'. In Wetherell, Margaret et al. (eds) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: SAGE.

Janisch, Wolfgang

1998 *Investigativer Journalismus und Pressefreiheit : ein Vergleich des deutschen und amerikanischen*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

Klein, Malcom W. and Nathan Maccobby

1954 Newspaper Objectivity in the 1952 Campaign. *Journalism Quarterly* 31 (1954), 285 - 296.

Lambeth, Edmund B.

1986 *Committed journalism : an ethic for the profession*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lorenz, Dagmar

2002 *Journalismus*. Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler.

Ludwig, Johannes

2002 *Investigativer Journalismus : Recherchestrategien - Quellen – Informanten*. Konstanz: UVK.

McNair, Brian

1994 *News and Journalism in the UK: a Textbook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, London: Routledge, 1999.

Palast, Greg

2005 *Greg Palast*. <http://www.gregpalast.com/aboutme.cfm> (accessed 15.9.2005)

2004 How to Steal the Presidency and Get Away with It. In John Pilger (ed.) *Tell Me No Lies: Investigative Journalism and Its Triumphs*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2004: 465-481.

Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism

2004 [www.pcij.org/training/Investigative%20Reporting.doc](http://www.pcij.org/training/Investigative%20Reporting.doc) (accessed 24.8.05)

Pilger, John

1992 *Distant Voices*. London: Vintage Books.

1998 *Hidden Agendas*. London: Vintage Books.

2004 (ed.) *Tell Me No Lies: Investigative Journalism and Its Triumphs*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Ramonet, Ignacio

2005 Die Krise der Medien und die fünfte Macht. *Die Wochenzeitung* 2.6.2005, 13

Teo, Peter

2000 Racism in the news: a Critical Discourse Analysis of news reporting in two Australian newspapers. *Discourse and Society*. In Talbot, Mary M. et al, *Language and power in the modern world*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003: 7-49.

Trappel, Josef et al.

2002 *Die gesellschaftlichen Folgen der Medienkonzentration: Veränderungen in den demokratischen und kulturellen Grundlagen der Gesellschaft*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Watson, James

2004 *Media communication : an introduction to theory and process*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

White, David Manning

- 1950 The 'Gate Keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News. In: Dexter, L.A. and White, D.M. (eds.): *People, Society and Mass Communication*. London: 1964, 160-172.

Wikipedia

- 2005a [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) (accessed several times between June and September 2005)
- 2005b Entry on "Muckraker". <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muckraker> (accessed 13.9.05)
- 2005c Entry on "Nellie Bly". [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nellie\\_Bly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nellie_Bly) (accessed 27.9.05)

Woodward, Bob and Carl Bernstein

- 1974 *All The President's Men*. New York: Simon and Schuster.