



Sweat not melodrama

Reading the structure of feeling in *All the President's Men*

■ **Bonnie Brennen**

University of Missouri, Columbia

ABSTRACT

Thirty years after the initial break-in, Watergate holds a mythic status within the history of American journalism. Whether individuals consider Watergate the beginning of modern investigative journalism or maintain that *The Washington Post's* reportage helped destroy the legitimacy of the American political process, the press's role in this political scandal continues to inspire journalists and provide justification for First Amendment protection of the press. Quite apart from the actual experience of Watergate, this essay suggests that the most famous chronicle of this political scandal, *All the President's Men*, codifies an ideology of journalism which has framed an understanding of the role of the press in the United States and Western Europe since the 1970s. *All the President's Men* can be read as an ur-text – a seminal text that illustrates a specific structure of feeling regarding the construction of contemporary journalistic practices.

KEY WORDS ■ anonymous sources ■ ideology of journalism ■ journalism history ■ political power ■ Raymond Williams ■ structure of feeling ■ Washington Post ■ Watergate scandal ■ Woodward and Bernstein

Introduction

Watergate represents a pivotal moment in the history of journalism. The prominent, heroic role occupied by the press in this political scandal encourages some researchers to link Watergate to the beginning of modern investigative journalism and to suggest that it is responsible for rejuvenating interest in the profession. Others insist that quite apart from merely reporting the misdeeds of the Nixon administration that *The Washington Post* is responsible for bringing down the president of the United States. Still others contend that Watergate has eroded the legitimacy of the American political process. But

whatever each individual assessment of Watergate may be, the political scandal was a 'gross abuse of power' (Miller, 1974: 324) that resulted in the disgrace and resignation of a president of the United States and the incarceration of more than 40 individuals connected with his administration.

The legacy of Watergate is a topic of continued speculation. In *Watergate in American Memory*, Michael Schudson finds that the political scandal of Watergate has now reached mythic status that helps to justify the continued First Amendment protection of an increasingly prominent media. For Schudson, the saga of Watergate both inspires practitioners of investigative reporting and empowers the enemies of an independent press (Schudson, 1992: 24).

Benjamin C. Bradlee, who was the executive editor of *The Washington Post* during the Watergate era, suggests that the main lesson of Watergate for politicians is: 'Don't get caught' (Bradlee, 1995: 383). Bradlee opines that unfortunately, politicians haven't learned that lesson yet. Bob Woodward, who with Carl Bernstein covered Watergate from its inception, maintains that the 'narcotic of presidential power' (Woodward, 1999: 515) has erroneously persuaded Nixon's successors, Ford, Reagan, Carter, Bush and Clinton that they would not be held accountable for their abuses of power. In his study of the legacy of Watergate, Woodward seems surprised to learn that Nixon's successors have not understood the effects of the scandal or the importance of a president sharing all relevant information with the press regarding any issue or activity that might be construed as questionable. The pervasiveness of the Watergate scandal is also apparent in words and phrases that have been added to the popular discourse including: 'cover-up', 'stonewall', 'smoking gun', 'I am not a crook' and the 'gate' suffix now used to describe a variety of government missteps.

Thirty years after the break-in, Watergate remains a topic of continued commentary and debate. As of 25 June 2002, the internet bookstore Amazon.com lists 229 books written about Watergate. These offerings include a variety of texts by individuals such as Richard Nixon, H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, G. Gordon Liddy, John Dean and E. Howard Hunt, all of whom once played a central role in the political scandal. Yet, the most famous chronicle of Watergate remains Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's *All the President's Men* (*Houston Chronicle Interactive*, 1997). First published at the height of Watergate in 1974, *All the President's Men* chronicles the hard work, diligence and persistence of *Washington Post* reporters Woodward and Bernstein in uncovering the governmental conspiracy that President Richard Nixon originally called a third-rate burglary. The bestseller topped the charts for five months in 1974 and helped to make folk heroes out of its authors. *Playboy* paid \$30,000 to run prepublication excerpts in two of its issues and Robert Redford bought the screen rights for \$450,000 (*Newsweek*, 1974: 79). In

addition, Book of the Month Club paid \$105,000 to obtain featured monthly selection rights, foreign publishing rights garnered more than \$100,000 (Downie, 1976: 45), and the paperback rights sold for one million dollars (Graham, 1997: 500). In 1999, Simon and Schuster reissued a 'classic' hardcover edition of *All the President's Men* to mark its 25th anniversary (Minzesheimer, 1999: 10D).

Quite apart from the actual experience of Watergate, this essay suggests that *All the President's Men* codifies an ideology of journalism which has framed an understanding of the role of the press in the United States and Western Europe since the 1970s. *All the President's Men* may be seen as an ur-text – a seminal text that illustrates a specific structure of feeling regarding appropriate press behavior in contemporary society.

Structure of feeling

Raymond Williams creates the concept structure of feeling to distinguish practical, evolving, lived experiences, within the hegemonic process, from the more formal fixed concepts of ideology or world-view. Structure of feeling represents a more nuanced interaction between a culture's formalized beliefs and the actively lived and felt meanings, values and experiences of its members. It describes:

Characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. (Williams, 1977/1988: 132)

In one sense, structure of feeling represents the culture of a specific place and time, the actual day-to-day interactions of a particular class or society, which corresponds to the dominant social character. However, it also represents expressions of interactions between other non-dominant groups (Williams, 1961: 63). It incorporates actual meanings and values of individuals and groups as they interact with and react against selected formalized beliefs. Williams explains that it is important to understand that each structure of feeling is 'distinct from the official or received thought of a time, which always succeeds it' (Williams, 1981: 163). When a culture's structure of feeling can no longer be addressed by its members, it can often be approximated from specific material elements of the recorded documentary culture including novels, poems, films, buildings and fashions.

Some contemporary researchers consider structure of feeling 'a contradictory and ad hoc formulation' (O'Connor 1989a: 408) that Williams later replaced with the notion of hegemony. However, this essay aligns with

Eldridge and Eldridge who find structure of feeling a 'predominant concept' (Eldridge and Eldridge, 1994: 112) throughout all of Williams's work, one that allows him to examine history as both a product and a process. Williams himself calls structure of feeling a fundamental component of his theory of cultural materialism and he continues to draw on the concept throughout his career. He envisions structure of feeling not only as a theoretical construct but also as a specific method of analysis. For example, in *The Long Revolution* structure of feeling articulates the specific meanings and values found in relationships and material elements of culture and clarifies the process of historical development through which specific social structures emerge and change. It is specifically in the forms and conventions of literature and art, elements of a material social process, that, for Williams, evidence of the dominant as well as any emergent structure of feeling can most readily be found.

Recognizing the difficulties inherent in naming his concept structure of feeling, Williams searches for a term within the process of consciousness that describes the ongoing comparison between what is articulated and what is actually lived. Finding no superior term, Williams creates structure of feeling to represent 'that which is not fully articulated or not fully comfortable in various silences, although it is usually not very silent' (Williams, 1981: 168).

Methodologically, structure of feeling provides a cultural hypothesis which attempts to understand particular material elements of a specific generation, at a distinct historical time, within a complex hegemonic process. For example, Williams's (1989, 1990) two-volume historical novel, *The People of Black Mountains*, offers a pointed illustration of how structures of feeling may be carried in literature, conveying the dominant and emergent ideologies of specific periods. These ideologies are transformed by the imagination to provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of an overall structure of society and of particular historical events. *The People of Black Mountains* blends fictional with theoretical interests, and offers readers a unique gaze into ways structures of feeling serve as an integral part of a cultural analysis.

It is the imagination that is thought to transform specific ideologies and produce an understanding that can be more 'real' than ordinarily observable. Instead of viewing the imagination in the future inventive sense, Williams sees the creative process utilizing a structure of feeling that is strongly felt from the beginning and is similar to the way actual relationships are felt. It is also a specific response to a particular social order that is integrated without separating it from the larger social experience. He explains:

this process is not distillation or novel association; it is a formation, an active formation, that you feel your way into, feel informing you, so that in general and in detail it is not very like the usual idea of imagination – 'imagine of. . .',

‘imagine that. . .’ – but seems more like a kind of recognition, a connection with something fully knowable but not yet known. (Williams, 1983: 264–5)

This sense of the imagination allows a synthesis between the personal and the social that creates and judges a whole way of life in terms of individual qualities. In his work on the English novel, Williams finds that, in novels, a sense of the community identity in knowable relationships is more deeply understood than in any other recorded experience. For him, the history of these people, available from traditional historical sources, is inadequate without the connecting meanings that emerge from novels. In novels it is possible to speak of a unique life, in a specific place and time, that exists as both individual and common experience. While the majority of experience directly represents and reflects the dominant ideology, there is an area of social experience, often neglected, ignored or repressed, which is resistant to the official consciousness. It is in this area of lived experience, from its structure of feelings, that art and literature is made.

Williams suggests that a structure of feeling can be read from novels, films and other material elements of culture and that these cultural artifacts actively shape experience and illuminate the connections between individuals and the political, social and economic structures of history. Aligned with Williams’s understanding of structure of feeling, this essay explores the work routine of Woodward and Bernstein, as well as the use of sources, and the understandings of ethics that are articulated in *All the President’s Men*. It also draws on memoirs, book reviews, critical essays, journalistic reporting and writing textbooks and other scholarly treatments written about Watergate. This essay suggests that in *All the President’s Men* an explicit structure of feeling is found that thousands of aspiring journalists have embraced and that critics and textbook authors utilize as a model of excellence in judging contemporary journalistic practices.

Sweat not melodrama

In their initial assessments of *All the President’s Men* critics predict the power that the novel would have in shaping the field of journalism. In his review, ‘And Nothing but the Truth’, *New Yorker* columnist Richard Rovere applauds the integrity and resourcefulness of Bernstein and Woodward and assesses the writing in *All the President’s Men* as ‘admirably straightforward’ and ‘wholly objective in its treatment of facts’ (Rovere, 1974: 107). Rovere suggests that the text will someday become indispensable to researchers and historians. The *New Statesman* predicts that students at every journalism program in the United States will be taught the story of Woodward and Bernstein’s persistence

at unraveling the Watergate story (Howard, 1974: 923). *Ms. Magazine* maintains that in their search for heroes, that other journalists are investing the 'very competent pair with magical powers' (Orr, 1974: 40) that will ultimately secure their place in journalism history. While reviewers compare *All the President's Men* to a detective thriller, the validity, accuracy and credibility of Woodward and Bernstein's account is never questioned. Critics call it a reporter's book, seem awestruck at the 'sheer mind-bending difficulty' (Just, 1974: 91) of investigating a White House administration known for its secrecy and insist that from a journalist's perspective, 'the tale has the smell of authenticity on every page' (Lukas, 1974: 437). Ultimately Bernstein and Woodward's attempts to piece together the story from 'tortuously mined fragments' (*Time*, 1974: 55) results in exposing the spying, sabotage and cover-ups undertaken by the president's men.

Woodward and Bernstein's diligence and hard work unraveling Watergate is a major theme explored in *All the President's Men* that has been revisited by journalists, researchers, critics and textbook authors throughout the years. It is their skill and persistence, their 'tale of journalistic derring-do and triumph' (*Newsweek*, 1974: 79) along with their 'heroic tenacity and monumental chutzpah' (Schorr, 1974: 41) that are seen as responsible for fixing Watergate in American's collective memory.

As Daniel Schorr explains in *The Progressive*, 'the real work of unlocking the Watergate conspiracy lay in sweat, not melodrama' (Schorr, 1974: 41). It is the dogged leg work, the constant checking and rechecking, the research and the hours spent interviewing that have been judged extraordinary investigative reporting efforts by critics and journalists alike. Dubbed Woodstein by their colleagues, Woodward and Bernstein develop a master list of several hundred sources that they call at least twice a week. They investigate telephone and bank records, trace down each and every lead and take extensive notes on everything they learn. The reporters keep every piece of information that they obtain, including early drafts of their stories, and they soon fill four filing cabinets.

As the number of leads and components in the Watergate story increased, the reporters became almost possessed by it . . . They often remained in the newsroom until late at night, making checks, reading clippings, outlining their next steps, trading theories. (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 50–1)

According to Bradlee, Woodward and Bernstein did the majority of the 'heavy lifting' on the Watergate story. 'The boys had one unbeatable asset: they worked spectacularly hard. They would ask 50 people the same question, or they would ask one person the same question f50 times, if they had reason to believe some information was being misheld' (Bradlee, 1995: 364).

Journalistic reporting and writing textbooks may be seen as an integral tool in the creation and reinforcement of the journalistic cannon and as material elements of documentary culture they also illustrate a specific ideological vision of journalism. In addition, journalism textbooks written since Watergate may also indicate the residual influence that Woodward and Bernstein's *All the President's Men* has on the creation of a structure of feeling regarding press behavior in contemporary society. Contemporary journalism textbooks often showcase Woodward and Bernstein's relentless pursuit of the complete story and frame their investigation as a noble quest. They warn student journalists that if these two *Washington Post* reporters had 'merely reported the obvious facts of the Watergate break-in' (Killenberg, 1992: 7) that the truth behind President Nixon's betrayal of the American people would never have been known. It is within this frame that Watergate is used to showcase the social responsibility function of the press, particularly as it relates to investigative reporting. While the definition of investigative reporting varies in journalism textbooks from 'just basic reporting' (McIntyre, 1991: 242) to reporting information that has been deliberately concealed (MacDougall and Reid, 1987: 200), textbook authors consistently judge Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate reportage to have reinvigorated interest in exposing corruption and wrongdoing in government and private institutions. Some of the textbooks suggest that Woodward and Bernstein's coverage not only showcases the strengths of investigative journalism but it begins to redefine the image of journalism as it suddenly gains 'celebrity and sex appeal' (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001: 112).

In the early months of the investigation, Washington insiders resent the *Post's* Watergate coverage and most of them refuse to talk with Woodward and Bernstein. Woodward remembers his lack of access to official sources, who would not even return his calls, made him feel 'like an outsider' (quoted in Cannon, 1977: 244). Unable to rely on traditional government sources, Woodward and Bernstein work from the bottom up, developing a network of sources from secretaries, clerks and mid-level administrative aids. Their persistence yields some good tips, yet the majority of the information that the reporters receive comes in small bits and pieces from sources who wish to remain anonymous. In an attempt to piece together the larger story, Woodward and Bernstein use an investigative strategy known as a 'circle technique' (Downie, 1976: 159). Once they receive a small fragment of information from a source with first-hand knowledge, Woodward and Bernstein then attempt to get at least two other people to confirm the tip. Woodward finds it is often easier to corroborate information, after an initial charge had been made, because sources feel that since someone else has broken the story that it is now acceptable for them to talk. The *Post* reporters sometimes include speculative

new information and discover that occasionally sources, in the process of denying a charge, will share other important information with them.

On several key occasions, a pre-Watergate friend of Woodward's, who comes to be known as Deep Throat, serves as a pivotal corroborating source for Woodstein. Despite his moniker's obvious association with a popular adult film, Deep Throat is actually a well-connected executive branch official who has access to information from the White House, the Justice Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREP). All confirmation and context that Deep Throat provides Woodward is strictly on 'deep background', meaning that he is never identified or quoted 'even as an anonymous source' (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 71). As Woodward grows increasingly frustrated by his outsider status and his lack of understanding of the full implications of Watergate, Deep Throat counsels him to take time to build an investigation from the edges. Deep Throat also encourages Woodward to gather an extensive amount of evidence against lower level government officials involved in the cover-up who might later be willing to talk about the involvement of other members of the Nixon administration.

Over the years Deep Throat has become the most widely debated anonymous source in the history of journalism. Journalism textbooks showcase Deep Throat as the 'most notable example' (Mencher, 2000: 397) of a key anonymous source protected at all costs by conscientious reporters. It is a key example that illustrates a fundamental journalistic principle – protection of sources. As the *Irish Times* explains, most journalistic codes of ethics encourage journalists never to reveal sources:

This principle works for both the journalist and the source: it is comforting to know that if you want to talk to a journalist you can do so without fear of being identified. The journalists know that if they disclosed the identity of even a few sources, then other sources would soon dry up (*Irish Times*, 1998: 6).

Recently, there has been increased speculation that Deep Throat was merely a literary device used by Woodward and Bernstein to give 'dramatic impact' (Sutton, 1998: 14) to the Watergate story. However, the 30th anniversary of the break-in, on 17 June 2002, fueled yet another round of speculation as to the actual identity of Deep Throat. Former White House Counsel John Dean, whose testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee helped to end the cover-up and landed him on the top of Richard Nixon's enemies list, released an e-book on Salon.com. In *Unmasking Deep Throat*, Dean details his search for Deep Throat and names his four Deep Throat finalists: Nixon consultant Pat Buchanan, Nixon speechwriter Ray Price, Nixon's personal aide Stephen Bull and Nixon press secretary Ron Ziegler (Dean, 2002). In addition

to his own reflections on Watergate, Dean's research includes comparing the original *All the President's Men* manuscript to the published version and studying key 'phrases that were edited out' (Kurtz, 2002: C1).

Thirty years after Watergate, Deep Throat's 'true' identity continues to be debated in political and journalistic circles. While journalists and textbook authors alike invoke Deep Throat to illustrate the principle of source confidentiality, it is important to remember that contemporary understandings of the role of Deep Throat in the Watergate investigation come directly from *All the President's Men* – it remains the ur-text of Watergate. Nowhere in Woodward and Bernstein's actual Watergate reportage is there any recognition of this key anonymous source. That Deep Throat has become a part of the ideology of journalism certainly helps to illustrate the role of *All the President's Men* in initially creating a structure of feeling related to the construction of contemporary journalistic practices.

Corroborating evidence

During the first nine months of the Watergate investigation, *The Washington Post* is virtually alone in its investigation of the break-in and subsequent cover-up. As the former publisher Katharine Graham recounts in her memoir *Personal History*:

The wire service and AP sent out our stories, but most papers didn't even run them, or buried them somewhere in the back pages. . . Because an exclusive story usually remained so for only about twenty-four hours before everyone jumped on it, I sometimes privately thought, if this is such a hell of a story, then where is everybody else? (Graham, 1997: 469)

While Graham and other *Washington Post* managers continue to support the Watergate investigation, as the charges against the administration escalate, Nixon and others begin 'plotting hardball revenge against the paper' (Bradlee, 1995: 343). Attorney General Richard Kleindienst charges that the *Post's* Watergate coverage is exaggerated and distorted. Top presidential aid Charles Colson maintains that *The Washington Post's* reportage is responsible for subverting the entire political process. He publicly describes Bradlee as the 'self-appointed leader' of a 'tiny fringe of arrogant elitists who infect the healthy mainstream of American journalism with their own peculiar view of the world' (quoted in Bradlee, 1995: 342–3). Ehrlichman and Nixon engineer a plan to orchestrate the purchase of the newspaper by the right-wing millionaire Richard Mellon Scaife and the *Post* runs into major difficulties when it attempts to renew the broadcast licenses for its television stations (Graham, 1997: 476). *Post* reporters are banned from White House social events and

excluded from reporting pools. Graham notes that 'a uniquely ludicrous, petty, and rather weird form of vengeance' (Graham, 1997: 475) takes place when the administration makes an example of the *Post's* beloved senior society reporter, Dorothy McCardle, and excludes her from covering White House social functions.

Convinced that the Nixon administration is undertaking a concerted effort to destroy the credibility of *The Washington Post*, editors become scrupulous in their attention to detail; they closely question each and every charge and accusation made. Apprehensive about the implications of their reportage, Bernstein and Woodward attempt to piece together the Watergate conspiracy from solid corroborated evidence and exercise caution about all of the stories that are published. Ultimately, if either has concerns about a word, a sentence, a paragraph or even an entire story, they leave it out (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 114). In *All the President's Men*, Bernstein and Woodward suggest that as the implications of the break-in begin to grow and threats against the *Post* escalate, a three-source policy on Watergate-related stories begins to take shape in the newsroom. 'Gradually, an unwritten rule was evolving: unless two sources confirmed a charge involving activity likely to be considered criminal, the specific allegation was not used in the paper' (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 79).

It is the three-source policy, first articulated in *All the President's Men*, that has come to define contemporary investigative journalism, in the United States, post-Watergate. The three-source rule is now the institutional standard, accepted in the field of journalism as 'fact'. It pervades journalistic conversations and has become a pivotal part of the ideology of journalism. A generation of journalism students has been taught to corroborate each charge and accusation with two other sources of information and through the course of their careers, they in turn have taught reporters, students and the public at large the imperative of this approach.

A hallmark of any ideology is its re-framing of traditions, rules and procedures as common sense. Antonio Gramsci refers to common sense as the 'sub-stratum of ideology' and suggests that as a transformative process it creates the folklore of a given group at a specific historical time (quoted in Bennett et al., 1989: 207). A recent CNN broadcast conversation between Anchor, Paula Zahn, and Senior White House Correspondent, John King, illustrates the ideological underpinnings of common-sense notions of information. On the 15 September 2001 CNN Saturday Morning News, Zahn and King discuss the use of sources following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that previous Tuesday. Zahn wonders if the use of speculative information about potential terrorist activities being reported by some media outlets might needlessly alarm viewers. King responds that report-

ing rumor and speculation is wrong and that journalists (meaning good journalists) have learned over the years that all charges and accusations must be corroborated by two other credible sources. According to King, sometimes only one additional source is used to confirm a charge but that overall journalists prefer using two sources to confirm all sensitive information. During their conversation, King emphasizes that the rule applies to all confidential information as well as tips given to journalists by government officials other than the president. Zahn and King's conversation is framed as a common-sense reminder of a standard journalistic practice that is being shared with viewers who, in these confusing times, might need a clarification of traditional journalistic policies and procedures.

A pivotal convention of contemporary journalism, the three-source rule is frequently addressed in journalistic reporting and writing textbooks. Textbook authors showcase Woodward and Bernstein's three-source policy to illustrate the need for accuracy, credibility and verification in reporting. The use of two independent, reliable sources to verify any allegation is a current journalistic standard reinforced in reporting and writing textbooks produced since Watergate. Concerned that 'people make mistakes. They lie. Their memories fail. Documents can be misleading or confusing' (Brooks et al., 1999: 426), textbook authors maintain that *The Washington Post's* Watergate three-source policy is an excellent rule for journalists to follow. The three-source rule is also thought to increase a journalist's accuracy and credibility through the process of confirming 'every important fact' (Fedler et al., 1997: 103). Overall, textbook authors generally agree with Stephens and Lanson's suggestion that the three-source rule should be used as a 'minimum standard for any reporter who has been handed some ready-to-fling mud' (Stephens and Lanson, 1986: 188).

Since *All the President's Men*, the three-source rule has not only been codified as part of the journalistic tradition but it has framed media assessments of popular culture. The notion of corroborating a charge with two additional sources of information is commonly found in motion pictures and on soap operas and television dramas alike. A recent critique of the film *The Insider*, by Carl Sessions Stepp, uses the three-source standard of excellence to assess the merits of the docudramatized version of *60 Minutes*. Stepp condemns *The Insider* as representing 'the gravest departure from standards connected to *All the President's Men*' (Stepp, 2000: 56) because of its use of a single unconfirmed source of information. While Stepp notes that *All the President's Men* institutionalized the three-source policy, he suggests that journalists should be 'haunted' by *The Insider's* use of only one questionable source – an executive who had been fired. Stepp maintains that journalists should also be concerned that the film might destroy public confidence in an important journalistic

standard of excellence. That Stepp is an *American Journalism Review* senior editor, and teaches at the University of Maryland College of Journalism, further illustrates the pervasiveness of the three-source rule as a fundamental journalistic practice.

Ethical dilemmas

In *All the President's Men* Bernstein and Woodward openly discuss their lapses of professionalism, including one time during the Watergate investigation when they choose expediency over the three-source policy and run a story implicating H. R. Haldeman in the conspiracy. In retrospect Woodward and Bernstein realize that they assumed too much, did not ask their sources the right questions and took dangerous shortcuts once they became convinced of Haldeman's role in Watergate. Ultimately they 'heard what they had wanted to hear' (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 193), placing their faith in a convoluted confirmation code rather than receiving solid confirmation of the charges. Fearing that their credibility with other sources has been shattered, Woodward and Bernstein address the unethical dimensions of their actions and vow to become extra careful in their assessment of information.

At one point in the investigation, Al Baldwin, a Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP) insider, who was paid for his services with 100 dollar bills, becomes a chief government witness who seems intent on 'spilling the whole story' (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 109). Woodward contacts Baldwin's lawyer regarding an interview and is told that other journalists are bidding for his client's story. Rumors indicate that a major magazine is offering \$5000 for Baldwin's first-person account. Although Bernstein and Woodward are interested in Baldwin's story, they explain that it is the *Post's* policy that it never pays for news. Judging by Woodstein's recounting of the Watergate saga, this is a *Post* policy that they never disregard throughout their investigation. However, the reporters occasionally compromise another *Post* policy that insists reporters must never misrepresent themselves. In *All the President's Men* Bernstein acknowledges that in his efforts to contact Donald Segretti, an attorney implicated in the dirty-tricks campaign against the Democrats, that he 'bent the rules a bit' (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 120) because he didn't identify himself as a reporter. Woodward and Bernstein's recounting of this ethical dilemma reinforce their understandings of what constitutes moral behavior. Overall, they judge their occasional lapses as unethical, leaving readers with the impression that in hindsight they might have tried to do some things differently – if only the stakes had not been so high.

During the re-election campaign there is speculation that the *Post's* Watergate investigation is politically motivated. In *All the President's Men* Woodward and Bernstein repeatedly deny any connection to the Democrats or the McGovern campaign. They recount one occasion when the McGovern campaign press secretary, Kirby Jones, asks Woodward to send over a copy of the next day's Watergate story. Woodward tells Jones that he resents his request and that the *Post's* Watergate stories are not written for the Democrats or McGovern. 'Woodward said that he and Bernstein were having enough trouble already with accusations of collusion. He told Jones to get his own copy of the paper at a newsstand, like everyone else, and slammed down the phone' (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 181).

Woodward and Bernstein abhor any charges of partisanship and hope that after election day the continued Watergate coverage would quell such criticisms. Woodward chooses not to vote in the election and maintains that such an action will allow him to be more 'objective' (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 199) in his reportage. According to *All the President's Men*, at all times during the investigation, Woodward and Bernstein strive to maintain their neutrality and independence that they find central to their journalistic mission. The recounting of their actions and the public response to these actions may be seen to reinforce an ideology of journalism that codifies an appearance of independence and neutrality and maintains an unwavering belief in the watchdog function of the press.

Critics who assess the ethical dilemmas associated with Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate investigation generally focus on the delicate balance between right and wrong in assessing moral choice. *National Review* columnist Robert Novak insists that any ethical lapses Woodward's reports might have had 'scarcely compares with the cold-blooded lawbreaking in high places they were exposing' (Novak, 1974: 824). Novak reminds his readers that Watergate is not an ideologically-motivated battle between a conservative administration and a liberal newspaper but is rather a conflict between lawbreakers, who continually deny their involvement, and their pursuers at the *Post* who provide the country with accurate reportage of criminal activity. Similarly, in her evaluation of *All the President's Men* for *The New York Times Book Review*, Harvard political science professor Doris Kearns finds that Woodward's occasional ethical lapses are justifiable within the larger context of the Watergate scandal (Kearns, 1974: 2). Another reviewer suggests that of far greater value than simply addressing their own ethical dilemmas is that in *All the President's Men* Bernstein and Woodward provide a guide to the 'ethical architecture of Washington D.C.' (Just, 1974: 91). It is this ethical guide that explains how business is actually transacted and informs readers of the ultimate power of nuance and suggestion.

Even ethicists who condemn some of Bernstein and Woodward's ethical choices connected with their pursuit of evidence suggest that when issues of 'overriding national importance' (Christians et al., 1995: 80) are involved that improprieties can be seen to outweigh the public benefits. Of course Woodward and Bernstein did not know the full severity of the crimes of Watergate during their initial investigation and, on one level, might be judged solely by their investigative reporting techniques. Yet, by the time that *All the President's Men* is released, the country has become fully aware that Watergate is not only a burglary at the Democratic Party's national headquarters but also 'an attempt to subvert the democratic process' (Shaw, 1998: 7B). The assessments of Woodstein's Watergate ethical conduct are usually made within the context of *All the President's Men* and the majority of the evaluations of their investigative reporting are framed by a consideration of the press as the fourth estate. While Woodward and Bernstein openly challenge some of their own actions, because Watergate is usually conflated with *All the President's Men*, one legacy of Watergate is that sometimes the ends do justify the means.

Legacy of *All the President's Men*

All the President's Men may be seen to have reinvigorated investigative reporting and helped to shape a new image for the field of journalism. Kovach and Rosenstiel maintain that because of Woodward and Bernstein's coverage of the Watergate scandal, all of journalism changed. For example, *New York Times* executive editor A. M. Rosenthal was so perturbed with *The Washington Post's* domination of the Watergate saga that he reorganized the *Times'* Washington bureau and created a team of investigative reporters (Kovack and Rosenstiel, 2001: 112). At the height of the Watergate investigation, the national editor of the *Los Angeles Times* grew increasingly disturbed by the failure of *Times'* Washington reporters to contribute to the breaking story. Apparently *Times'* reporters were attempting to cover Watergate over the telephone.

'Tell them to get off their asses and knock on doors,' the editor shouted to the Washington news editor. The advice went out with increasing frequency and ferocity, until the Washington editor decided to post a sign in the office: GOYA/KOD. Get off your asses and knock on doors. (Mencher, 2000: 24)

Other newspapers throughout the United States and Western Europe began to formalize the role of investigative reporter; in 1974, investigative reports garnered four Pulitzer Prizes, 'prompting *Time* magazine to declare it "year of the Muckrakers" ' (Protess et al., 1991: 53). Local television news programs began creating their own investigative teams (I-teams), weekly news magazine shows regularly broadcast reports on public and private malfeasance and 60

Minutes becomes the most successful and influential network investigative news program.

If as Bradlee maintains that 'Watergate marked the final passage of journalists into the best seats of the establishment' (Bradlee, 1995: 407), *All the President's Men* may be seen to codify the practices of this new breed of journalists. Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate journey has cast local reporters in a heroic light and has inspired at least one generation of students to 'think of journalism as an honorable way to spend a life' (Baker, 1998: A21).

In retrospect, *All the President's Men* is considered to have elevated the status of reporters, taking them to 'new, unprecedented levels of prestige' (Powers, 1999: 438). It is a change that prompts some critics to now consider journalists part of the ruling elite (Cockburn and Silverstein, 1996: 1). *Editor and Publisher* columnist Richard Reeves suggests that the legend created by *All the President's Men* 'has it that the 28 year-old barely employable long-haired Jewish kid, and the 29 year-old inexperienced WASP, tolerated each other long enough to save the Republic. They shouted that the evil king had no clothes' (Reeves, 1999: 12). While Reeves realizes that it was the courts that actually brought Richard Nixon down, he insists that Woodward and Bernstein did a remarkable job digging through records, tracking down each and every tip and keeping the story alive when it wasn't on the national media agenda.

That *All the President's Men* has made cultural icons of Woodward and Bernstein has not gone unnoticed by contemporary journalists. According to *Los Angeles Times* media critic David Shaw, these days respectable reporters are fearful that they might miss out on Watergate number two. In response, Shaw finds that journalists are 'wallowing in stories that once were fodder only for the tabloids' (Shaw, 1998: 7B).

A structure of feeling, framed within a specific historical context, emerges from a close reading of *All the President's Men*, one that highlights the emergence of contemporary journalistic standards, values and practices. Ultimately, the concept of structure of feeling serves a way of understanding the process through which actively lived feelings and experiences are formed. It becomes a search for 'characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone, specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feelings as thought' (Williams, 1977/88: 132). Understanding the connections between the past, present and future, each specific structure of feeling helps to articulate the social experience as it is still being lived, before some of it may become codified as world view or ideology.

The rebellious spirit of the 1960s influences the collective consciousness of the early 1970s and offers an important backdrop for the Watergate saga. Amid a growing trade deficit, shrinking gold reserves, accelerating inflation

and rising unemployment, a credibility gap emerges between American citizens and the government. Political cynicism, anti-establishment uprisings and the growth of the women's and environmental movements help to define the early 1970s. Media competition increases with the growth of television as a news medium in the late 1960s. No longer the predominant news medium, in the early 1970s, daily newspapers respond to financial problems with a series of mergers, buy-outs and joint operating agreements.

In *All the President's Men* the lived experiences of Woodward and Bernstein's tenacity, diligence and determined pursuit of a story – no matter what the consequences – not only describes their Watergate investigation but also illustrates the re-emergence of investigative reporting in American journalism. Uncovering the facts of Watergate becomes a noble quest for Woodward and Bernstein, one that sees the social responsibility function of the press as central to the preservation of a democratic political process and justifies occasional lapses in their ethical behavior. That the Watergate investigation ultimately helps to reinvigorate the public's perception of newspapers as the serious news medium is an interesting outcome also worth considering.

In their Watergate reportage, Woodward and Bernstein maintain traditional understandings of objectivity yet they challenge the existing use of official sources, specifically as they work their investigation from the bottom up, utilizing clerks, secretaries and mid-level administrative aids as a network of sources. They augment the use of anonymous sources by corroborating each charge with at least two other independent sources. The three-source rule begins as a way to enhance the credibility of their Watergate investigation, as a strategy to fight the Nixon administration's efforts to destroy *The Washington Post*. Long before the three-source policy becomes a journalistic norm, in *All the President's Men* a new standard for evidence begins to emerge.

Since its release in 1974, *All the President's Men* has become the seminal text in the study of Watergate. Much of what has become common knowledge about the break-in and the subsequent cover-up does not come from the actual Watergate coverage but instead comes directly from Woodward and Bernstein's recounting of the scandal. John Dean's recent reliance on *All the President's Men* in his investigation of Deep Throat once again showcases the role of this book in creating the history of Watergate.

Over the years some of the journalistic practices outlined in *All the President's Men* have become codified as part of the ideology of journalism. Yet, what emerges in this ur-text is a specific structure of feeling, related to the role of journalism in American society. *All the President's Men* taps into the lived experiences, values and meanings of Bernstein and Woodward's Watergate investigation and offers an early vision of what contemporary journalism would soon become.

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Biographical note

Bonnie Brennen is Associate Professor at the Missouri School of Journalism. Her cultural history interests stem from her professional media work. She is the author of *For the Record: An Oral History of Rochester, New York, Newswriters* (Fordham University Press, 2001) and co-editor, with Hanno Hardt, of *Picturing the Past: Media, History and Photography* (University of Illinois Press, 1999) and *Newswriters: Towards a History of the Rank and File* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

Address: School of Journalism, University of Missouri, Columbia, 208 Neff Hall, Columbia, Missouri, 65201, USA. [email: brennenb@missouri.edu]

