GOLDEN AGE HEROES: THE AMERICAN MYTH OF WOODWARD AND BERNSTEIN

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ABSTRACT

The Watergate scandal of the 1970s is one of the greatest presidential scandals in American history. In an elaborate scheme in quest for more power, President Richard Nixon and his administration performed unconstitutional acts of corruption while in the White House. These acts were brought to the public by the media and the investigative reporting done on the scandal. Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward are two of the most famous investigative journalists in American history due to their work on the scandal at The Washington Post. After the scandal had passed and Richard Nixon resigned from his presidency, Woodward and Bernstein wrote a book in 1974 telling of their experience reporting on Watergate titled All the President's Men. This book was then made into an iconic film in 1976.

The release of the book and film created a narrative of the two reporters as heroic journalists and propelled them into the public eye and popular culture. Woodward and Bernstein became poster children of investigative journalism, and my research aims to highlight the portrayal of the David and Goliath archetype applied to the journalists reporting the wrongdoings of the Nixon administration. In this thesis, I look at the relationship between the book, film, reactions from popular culture and the preservation of the heroic identity. I argue that that the book and film versions of All the President's Men perpetuated the myth of Woodward and
Bernstein as hero-journalists who single-handedly cracked the Watergate case, glazing over the factual history of the event and setting a precedent for how investigative journalism was perceived by the public, allotting a place for them in American popular culture years later.

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I began to worry if a day went by without receiving an e-mail from Colva Weissenstein. She was the mother hen to us thesis chickadees and kept us all calm, cool and collected (for the most part) with her reassuring messages of support and making sure we had everything we needed, from assignment reminders to templates, in order to complete finish this project.

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INTRODUCTION: The Heroes

As I made my way through the crowded aisle to the last available seat in a theater at E Street Cinema, an indie and folk film theater in Washington, D.C., and also one of the few places Spotlight was being shown in October of 2015, the lights dimmed and the previews began. Fresh off the film festival circuit, reviews were beginning to surface about the movie. The first two reviews I came across on the Internet both claimed it to be “this generation’s All the President’s Men.” Popular culture soon picked up on the buzz about the film and it became a “must see,” playing at major theaters and receiving great reviews. The abuse scandal in the Catholic Church had been published in major newspapers and broadcasted on many networks for years, but the release of this film brought the scandal back into the limelight. The story in film form created an entertaining way to view the Catholic Church abuse scandal and rekindled the firestorm of conflict. Fast forward a few months and the movie won “Best Picture” at the 2016 Academy Awards. Intrigued at the correlation between the 1976 film on Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s investigation of the Watergate scandal and Spotlight, I decided to see the film and assess if it would add to my thesis.

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1 Spotlight, Film, directed by Tom McCarthy. (Los Angeles: Open Road Films, 2015).

Spotlight is not only a great film, but embodies many aspects of the 1976 film directed by Alan Pakula, All the President’s Men³, and the precedent it set for movies about journalism. All the President’s Men was unique for its time, exposing a world of investigative journalism that the public had rarely seen before. Spotlight exposes the process of journalists uncovering conflicts or scandals in the same way, but in a more contemporary setting. Both films chronicle a newspaper uncovering a behemoth of a scandal covered up by a major institution. Watergate will go down in American history as one of the greatest presidential scandals of all time. It was monumental due to the media uncovering and publicizing much of the corruption in Nixon’s administration. With Spotlight, other newspapers and media sources had reported on the Catholic Church’s cover up of abuse, but it was the emphasis the Boston Globe placed on the magnitude of the scandal that shocked people. This was the same disbelief the public held when the corruption in the government was traced all the way to Nixon in the Watergate Scandal.

Both films follow a David-versus-Goliath storyline. In Spotlight, it is the Boston Globe and the Spotlight team against the institution of the Catholic Church in a predominantly Catholic city. In All the President’s Men, it is the Washington Post versus the United States government, and more specifically the Nixon administration, which had public support on their side. The narrative of the underdog overcoming and outsmarting the powerful Goliath is very popular in society and has lent itself to the staying power of All the President’s Men, and influenced the popularity of Spotlight.

³ All the President’s Men, directed by Alan Pakula, (Los Angeles: Warner Bros. and Wildwood Enterprises, 1976).
The fact that Spotlight was compared to All the President’s Men in the title of the aforementioned review depicts a precedent that the 1976 film set and the assumption that any readers interested in Spotlight should have seen, or at least be familiar with All the President’s Men. This assumption reflects the major impact the film had on popular culture and the legacy of Woodward, Bernstein, and the Watergate scandal. When Watergate is mentioned, the reporters’ names usually follow shortly after. This is because the film was so popular and easily accessible to the public that Woodward and Bernstein were given much credit in uncovering the entire scandal during their time at the Post. This notion was also assisted by the release of their book prior to the movie, but even that only reached a select demographic and was not enough to alter the American memory of Watergate. The glazing over of details and events in the movie for Hollywood purposes and viewing the scandal through the lens of two reporters that started out as average guys was a story Americans could appreciate and simplified the events of Watergate. The Hollywood film became truth, and the legacy of Woodward and Bernstein as journalistic heroes was born.

This thesis argues that the book and film versions of All the President’s Men perpetuated the myth of Woodward and Bernstein as hero-journalists who single-handedly cracked the Watergate case, glazing over the factual history of the event and setting a precedent for how investigative journalism was perceived by the public, allotting a place for them in American popular culture years later. The following chapters will look into how the book and film are portrayed, how the public perceived it, and the influence it had on history post-history leading up to the contemporary film of Spotlight, maintaining the spot of investigative journalism in the public eye.
Literature Review

There are many books, movies, academic, and scholarly works about Watergate and the legacy of Bernstein and Woodward. Watergate was one of the most outrageous political scandals and the story will remain a major part of American history. The facts of the scandals of the Nixon presidency are out there, but the legacy of reporting on the scandal is something that has been crafted by Woodward, Bernstein, members of the Post staff, reactions from the Nixon administration, staff, government officials and third party members involved in the entire fiasco. There are existing works covering Watergate, comparing it to other political scandals, critical works on Woodward and Bernstein’s journalistic practices during the ordeal, and more connecting the two. But none are focused on the mythos surrounding Woodward and Bernstein as hero-journalists and how they depicted the story through the books they wrote post-Watergate and the film that created a popular culture sensation.

While researching my thesis and looking at all the relevant work on my topic that has already been published, I came across interesting studies on Woodward and Bernstein’s legacy on investigative journalism and how they increased the attractiveness of the field tenfold. Jon Marshall’s Watergate’s Legacy and the Press: The Investigative Impulse (2011) looks at

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4 Keith W. Olson, Watergate: The Scandal that Shook America (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Fred Emery, Watergate: The Corruption of American Politics and the Fall of Richard Nixon (New York: Touchstone, 1995); Kevin Hillstrom, Watergate (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2004); Lamar Waldron, Watergate: The Hidden History (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2011). Watergate is a widely studied subject. The corruption in the Nixon administration is studied by many and the details recorded over time in many different books and forms.

Watergate from a later point in time and reflects on the journalistic practices of Woodward and Bernstein’s investigative work. Marshall focuses on society’s view of Woodward and Bernstein and the investigative reporters were viewed as courageous and a guard against injustice. This was great supplemental scholarly work for the “hero-journalist” aspect of my project, and I used it to make connections and conclusions. But it did not really analyze the aspect of Woodward and Bernstein’s narrative that caused them to have the effect on the journalism world and public. It discussed their actions, their work and how people reacted. But it did not analyze the mythos that was the attraction point.

Alicia Shepard’s *Woodward and Bernstein: Life in the Shadow of Watergate* (2007), is a biography on the duo based on interviews with them as well as people in their lives and involved with cracking Watergate. This book was nice to bolster my background knowledge on the journalists and added additional perspectives besides Woodward and Bernstein’s. The detailed interviews were helpful in introducing perceptions of the journalists. They helped me draw conclusions in my thesis that were not made in Shepard’s book, and piece together why certain players in the Watergate scandal were more focused on than others.

*Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget and Reconstruct the Past* (1992) by Michael Schudson focuses on how America remembers Watergate and idolized Woodward

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and Bernstein, but solely stated it, just as Shepard’s book does as well. While Shepard used interviews to inform and explain Woodward and Bernstein’s journey to fame, Schudson focuses more on memory of Watergate as a whole, comparing the details to the public sentiment on the scandal. In Schudson’s section on memory, Schudson covers American memory and how they consumed Watergate as a scandal solved by Woodward and Bernstein due to the influence of the media, but he does not make the connection that I argue regarding the connection between the David and Goliath mythos and the combination of the book, film, and public presence.

For the film section of my thesis, I read an essay on “Cinematic Watergate” by Kingsley Marshall in Watergate Remembered: The Legacy for American Politics (2012), which discusses the partial truth being exposed in the 1976 film and how this affected the way Americans remember the events of the Watergate scandal. Marshall discusses the sole focus on Woodward and Bernstein in the film, but I take that aspect combined with information from Shepard’s interviews with Robert Redford and director Alan Pakula on their reasoning behind solely focusing on the journalists which separates my work from Marshall’s.

Methodology

To fully understand Woodward and Bernstein’s experience while investigating Watergate, I used different primary and secondary sources in the form of books, interviews, films, podcasts,

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journals, magazine articles, and movie reviews to gain foundational knowledge on the two reporters. I began with Woodward and Bernstein’s book *All the President’s Men* (1974)\(^{10}\), as a main primary source to build a foundation for my thesis and the basis of much of my research. This book is crucial to understanding the occurrences of Watergate from Woodward and Bernstein’s personal perspectives. Much of the content in this book is in “tell-all” fashion, which could not be published in national newspapers and was off the record. After Watergate was uncovered, they were able to write this book in their voices based on their experiences. This information was essential background knowledge for my project, which I based much of what they described about their work ethic, the experiences and struggles they had, and how these crafted their story.

After the book was published, a film adaptation of the book was made, *All the President’s Men* (1976), which I used as a major source of comparison to the book and a purveyor of the heroism myth. This movie depicts the story of Woodward and Bernstein and their journey in uncovering the scandal. While this movie was made to tell the story in a different way than the book, I analyzed it from how Hollywood perceived the scandal, and how the directors wanted to craft the film in order to portray it in a specific light to viewers.

\(^{10}\) Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, *All the President’s Men: The Greatest Reporting Story of All Time* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974).
I also used Woodward and Bernstein’s published pieces in the Washington Post\textsuperscript{11}, as well as their notes and “Watergate papers” archived at the University of Texas\textsuperscript{12}, as supplemental information to support any ideas in my project or claims that I make.

Once I finished my primary research, I moved on to books written about Woodward and Bernstein, rather than by themselves. These books included some aforementioned in my Literary Review section: Woodward and Bernstein: Life in the Shadow of Watergate by Alicia Shepard, Watergate's Legacy and the Press: The Investigative Impulse by Jon Marshall and Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget and Reconstruct the Past by Michael Schudson. After reading these to gain alternative perspectives on Woodward and Bernstein and their work, Georgetown librarian Maura Seale helped me find articles and more contemporary editorials closer to monumental anniversaries (30\textsuperscript{th} and 40\textsuperscript{th}) that spoke to their legacy as “hero-journalists”. These articles included publications in the Washingtonian as well as other magazines and newspapers.

I looked at contemporary interviews from the two journalists, usually given on anniversaries of Watergate, from CBS, NPR and talks given at universities and other conferences.


\textsuperscript{12}Many of the notes taken by Woodward and Bernstein during the scandal are housed at the University of Texas at Austin. The collection includes 75 file-drawer sized boxes, with everything from notebooks to drafts to memos. Lee Hockstader, “Watergate Papers Sold for $5 Million,” Washington Post, 8 April, 2003, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/watergate-papers-sold-for-5-million/2012/06/04/gJQAQnUYTIV_story.html.
Georgetown Professor Brian Hochman, my adviser, suggested the film *Spotlight* to add to my contemporary memory “bookend”. This film, along with reviews, make up my contemporary end of research. I began the thesis process toying with the idea of media’s influence on society and after entertaining different eras of media throughout American history, I narrowed it down to Watergate and Woodward and Bernstein. Their identities as household names in journalism were very interesting to me, so my overarching question was: *As a result of their work on the Watergate scandal for the Washington Post, how did the narrative of Woodward and Bernstein’s heroism emerge and how does the myth of the hero-journalist maintain a hold in American culture today?* This question led to my thesis statement and guided my research throughout the entire process.

*Section Overview*

This thesis is divided into four sections, plus the introduction and conclusion. I chose to divide the chapters up in a chronological order, but also by category of my research. The order of the sections best displays the growth of the heroic myth attributed to Woodward and Bernstein, and takes the reader through the journey of their rise to iconic status.

The first section of my thesis gives an introduction for historical background to Woodward and Bernstein’s roles at the *Post* and their journey through investigating and writing articles on Watergate. I mainly discuss the book’s narrative, time of release and the effect it had on popular culture.

The second section of my thesis transitions from the book to the release of the film in 1976. This was a major turning point for the legacy of Woodward and Bernstein and perpetuated
the myth of them as hero-journalists. I analyze specific scenes of the film and the iconography that made the film so memorable and iconic in American history.

In the third section, I analyze post-Watergate fame for Woodward and Bernstein. With the release of the book and the film two years later, the journalists received a lot of press and time in the public eye. They became popular culture sensations, especially in the journalism world and on the college tour circuit. This fame is a result of the legacy the book and film built up for them, and contributed to their staying power in popular culture for years to come.

My fourth and final section brings the analysis that I have done on *All the President’s Men* film and book, and Woodward and Bernstein as journalists, back into a contemporary lens by comparing the film to the newly released, *Spotlight*, and exposing the influence that *All the President’s Men*, and more specifically the Hollywood portrayal of the scandal, had on investigative journalism.

Together, these four sections will present the beginning and endpoint to the “golden age of journalism” through the lens of Woodward and Bernstein, investigate the origin of the their ‘heroic’ affiliation with Watergate, and show how the David and Goliath archetype has kept the journalists names in popular culture and given them iconic status.

**Section 1: THE BOOK**
Watergate is known as one of the greatest American presidential scandals in history.\(^\text{13}\) It was 1968 and the country was beginning to strengthen its international influence under the fist of republican President Richard Nixon, who was reelected in a landslide victory in November that year. Newspapers were battling for the top spot in print media, competing with magazines, as well as television broadcasts and radio. *The New York Times* was one of the nation’s top newspapers and *The Washington Post*, was always competing with them for the number one spot. After her husband Philip’s suicide, Katharine Graham took the reigns as leader of the paper, officially serving as publisher throughout the Watergate scandal.

Graham had a tight knit staff, which she managed closely, always checking in and following the stories her newspaper was publishing for the public. Among this cohort were the editors Ben Bradlee, Howard Simons, Harry Rosenfeld and Barry Sussman. Yet, ask any American which names are synonymous with Watergate, and rarely would the aforementioned would be listed. The first two would almost certainly be Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

The two reporters were amateurs, as Woodward and Bernstein were by no means top reporters. In fact, they could not have been more different. Bob Woodward was a straight-laced Yale graduate from the Midwest with a history in the Navy officer corps.\(^\text{14}\) He was initially denied a job at the *Post* for lack of journalism experience, prompting him to work at the Montgomery County Sentinel and then accepting a job at the *Post* a year later. He stuck to the

\(^\text{13}\) Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*. The following section contains background and historical information, as well as details, obtained from the contents of Woodward and Bernstein’s book.

\(^\text{14}\) Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 13.
rules of journalism and was very calculated in his approach to writing. Most importantly, he was young, eager, and hungry—the perfect attributes for an aspiring journalist. Carl Bernstein was the black sheep reporter who had worked his way up from a job in the Post’s mailroom to a writing position in the paper’s Metro section. He had ambition, but was a sloppy reporter and always missing deadlines. The one characteristic he and Woodward shared was the thirst for success and a story. He was always trying to get his name in the byline by any measures, which frustrated other writers.

Where Bernstein fell off, Woodward picked up. And when the rules needed to be bent a little, Bernstein was there pushing Woodward to go deeper in the story. Their personalities, although different, balanced each other out. They were dedicated and relentless. Although the reporters could not have investigated Watergate without the help of many, including editors, sources, anonymous tips, and more, they continue to remain in the memory of Americans, and those around the world familiar with Watergate, as the two individuals who brought down Nixon.

It was their different aesthetics as journalists that brought, and kept, these two on the Watergate story. When the burglars broke into the Democratic National Convention offices in 1972, Rob Sussman sent Bob Woodward to cover the trial, giving the new writer something to occupy his time. The story was not considered to be of high importance, but as the trial unfolded, alarming details emerged that caught Woodward and the editors’ attention, such as one of the burglars’ former job as an FBI agent. The plot thickened, and something deeper than a simple

15 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 15.
break-in seemed to have occurred. Woodward followed the story, which attracted the always-wandering eye of Carl Bernstein, who was constantly hungry for a byline.

The two were assigned to the break-in case after much pleading from their editor to the top editor, Ben Bradlee. As time went on, the case was unraveling into a greater mess than anyone had initially suspected. Bradlee wanted to reassign the story to more seasoned reporters. In his eyes, this was no longer a story for a young, fresh-on-the-scene Woodward, or a sloppy, rambunctious Bernstein. But Sussman pleaded—the two had already made connections and had leads that other journalists did not. They had to stay on the story.

Thus, Watergate began to consume the writers’ lives. This style of reporting was rare and thrilling, something neither of them had done before of this magnitude. The scandals making up Watergate certainly did not happen in Bernstein’s local government elections of Virginia, or the smaller investigative pieces he took on. This style of reporting, also known as muckraking, had been done before.\textsuperscript{16} Upton Sinclair popularized investigative reporting in 1906 with his book, \textit{The Jungle}, exposing the disgusting conditions of Chicago’s meatpacking facilities.\textsuperscript{17} The “Pentagon Papers”, which were released in 1971, a year before the Watergate break-in, reminded the people that transparency between the government and public is a foggy matter.\textsuperscript{18} Newspapers had reporters dedicated to investigative pieces, but not on as large of a scale as they would post-Watergate.

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{16} Marshall, \textit{Watergate’s Legacy and the Press}, 142.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{17} Upton Sinclair, \textit{The Jungle} (New York: Double Day, Jabber & Company, February 26, 1906).
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America was so intrigued by Woodward and Bernstein’s pieces on Watergate because they were essentially gossip pieces on the government compared to the dry reporting of everyday happenings in America and around the world. Scandal sells and America was along for the ride. Their articles stood out and grabbed readers’ attention, leading to Woodward and Bernstein wanting to share their story, the story behind the headlines. Towards the end of the Watergate investigation, the reporters began talks with book publisher, Simon & Schuster, on making that story known.

The duo had spent almost four years together piecing together a scandal that rocked the nation, but only a few family members, friends, and of course those at the Post, knew what they had actually been through to get all of the information. For a simple 300-word column, they regularly met with Deep Throat [their anonymous, highly confidential source] at odd hours of the night, or traveled many miles to meet with current and ex-government employees. They had to be extremely careful with their language and facts, as they were ultimately dealing with the highest power in American government. They wanted people to know their story, and thus, *All the President’s Men* was born.

Before they signed any contracts with publishers though and the thought of a book was still up in the air, Woodward and Bernstein had already won four major journalism awards. As they finalized details with Simon & Schuster to publish *All the President’s Men* in May of 1973,

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19 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 89.

20 Shepard, *Woodward and Bernstein*, 64.
the *Post* won the Pulitzer Gold Medal for Distinguished Meritorious Public Service. While the journalists wrote the book to tell their story, they were not hesitant to stop at print. The pair sold the rights to Redford in 1973 right after they submitted the first manuscript, before the book was even on shelves.

Woodward and Bernstein first thought of writing a book at the end of their Watergate investigation, when they were able to reflect on the events that took place in the past four years. There were so many different takes on who Woodward and Bernstein really were and their motives for the story. Government employees, such as Press Secretaries Gerald Warren and Ronald Ziegler, used Woodward and Bernstein in their crusade against the media, accusing them of using their influence at the *Post* to paint an awful picture of Nixon in order to sway the election. Some mistakes in their articles and miscalculations of evidence set the reporters back every once in a while, and the secretaries’ arguments became more valid. But others truly saw that the journalists were uncovering something greater than any person imagined when the break-in scandal of 1972 occurred. Woodward and Bernstein were not completely selfless in their investigation, as journalism was their career and they grabbed onto any lead they could. Their articles seemed blasphemous at some points throughout the investigation. But when the truth began to unravel, they gained credibility among the public.

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23 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 121.
Although there were many reporters working endlessly on covering Watergate, Woodward, Bernstein and “those guys at the Post”\(^{24}\) always seemed to have the most incriminating stories first. There were certain instances when *Time* or the *New York Times* would beat them to the publishing deadline, but the authors of those stories are not as closely associated or remembered by popular culture as the two *Post* reporters are remembered today. Woodward and Bernstein have become synonymous with Watergate as the details of the scandal slowly become part of the fuzzy category of the past, but Woodward and Bernstein are almost just as prevalent as Nixon is to Watergate in the public’s current memory of the scandal.

While many of the other newspapers, media outlets, and journalists had a large hand in reporting Watergate, it is Woodward and Bernstein’s investigative work that has kept their legacy alive. This work is detailed thoroughly in *All the President’s Men*, where the journalists walk the reader through their experience over the course of piecing together the investigation. The book is written in third person, with Woodward and Bernstein referring to themselves from an outside point of view. They do this in order to gain credibility with the reader and explain their perspective in a hopefully non-biased manner. This writing style also aims to aid the writers in crafting the book in a way that allows them to create characters out of themselves. By avoiding a first person biographical writing style and approaching the writing from an outside lens, they become characters in the book. This allows the writers to present more heroic versions of themselves without losing the humility of their writing. This humility is present throughout the book when they point out one another’s flaws and strengths.

In no way did the journalists attempt to justify their mistakes while investigating Watergate. They knew they bent standards of journalism ethics, but clarify that if they had not done that, the outcome of their investigation may have not been as successful. For example, while searching for tips or any evidence of FBI involvement in the scandal, Woodward and Bernstein wrote, “They had realized that confronting the agent’s boss was unethical as soon as they had done it. They had endangered the agent’s career, betrayed his trust and risked credibility with other sources.” These type of reflective statements littered throughout their book are the candid and honest moments that allow the reader to understand the journalists are just people also and make mistakes.

This book was a new type of “tell all” at the time of its release. America followed the drama of Watergate as it unfolded, but many did not know the behind the scenes action that occurred on the journalists side. The book pulled back the curtain for the public, and exposed the inside story of journalists uncovering one of the greatest government scandals in history. The Nixon administration created an institution of secrecy in the White House, and as proven, the president was very skeptical of his political opponents. But journalists exposing issues to the public that the White House deemed unfit for the public to have knowledge of only enraged the government, whereas the media viewed these reports as the people’s right to knowledge. If the leader of the country was committing questionable acts, then the public should know according to the media. And it was Woodward and Bernstein’s main mission throughout this experience to expose that. Once they began investigating, there was no stopping.

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25 Woodward and Bernstein, *All the President’s Men*, 147.
The two men were trained in news writing, which differs from writing a novel or detective story, as *All the President’s Men* is sometimes compared to. Their writing style is simple and to the point, giving a descriptive look into their lives as reporters. There were many exchanges described throughout the book, some breakthroughs in their investigation where they received praise from their editors and some reprimanding where their superiors are not pleased. This constant pressure to get the story right with acceptable sources and proper evidence is a peek behind the curtain into the stressful and hectic nature of a newsroom.

In one of the first exchanges between executive editor Ben Bradlee and Metro editor Harry Rosenfeld who brought Woodward and Bernstein in with a new lead in the story, the nature of reporting is exposed and made clear to the public how up and down investigative reporting can be. Rosenfeld is enthusiastic about a new lead Woodward and Bernstein have, but their enthusiasm is soon crushed by Bradlee’s realistic inquiry of the nature of the lead: “Bradlee came out of his glassed-in office at the far end of the newsroom and sat down in a chair near Bernstein’s desk. He was holding a copy of the story in his hands and shaking his head . . . leaning back now, he said, ‘You haven’t got it. A librarian and a secretary say this fellow Hunt looked at a book. That’s all. Get some harder information next time’ he said as he walked off.”

The constant fluctuation of momentum and the highs and lows Woodward and Bernstein experienced in situations like this with their editors tell a story of two characters that overcame constant obstacles. Right when they think they are on track and have a story, they are shut down by superiors. Just as the David-and-Goliath archetype has the underdog overcoming all obstacles,

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26 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 65.

27 Woodward and Bernstein, *All the President’s Men*, 33.
Woodward and Bernstein also overcome the obstacle of their editors checking their writing and giving them the green light to send to print or shutting their ideas down completely.

This ability to expose the highest power in the United States is one of the enthralling qualities of *All the President’s Men*, and an element that made the book so compelling to the public. Americans were able to follow along with the entire process of writing stories on Watergate and putting clues together as if they were journalists. There were scandals involving corporations and military operations, but never one to the tune of the president sabotaging political opponents and creating his own secret rulebook. Woodward and Bernstein released the book in May of 1974, right before the official resignation of President Nixon. The two events being so close in date were beneficial for the journalists’ praise from the public, and they were given much of the credit for their work and the influence it had on Nixon resigning.

While the book was still becoming popular and sales were rising, it was hard not to tack Woodward and Bernstein as the pair that took down a corrupt president. Although they deny this title and explain that they simply reported their findings and “did their job”\(^\text{28}\), popular culture has created personas around the two journalists as heroes. The root of their image in popular culture as heroes is the exposure and attention they received from the release of their book. It promoted their names in close association with the Watergate scandal and created a bond between the investigation and who received credit.


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Woodward and Bernstein jumped on the book deal at the perfect moment to continue the momentum of attention from the public about Watergate. This was truly their big break as cultural icons. Their book was unique because rather than a tell-all about the actual events of Watergate or what the released documents and tapes contained, they put a spin on the story. By telling it from their own perspective and sharing their story, they simultaneously connected their journey with the events that the public knew had occurred. Even some of the events and articles written about them were probably passed over by many at their original publishing, but put into a cohesive timeline in their book. There is a “List of Characters” before the book starts, serving as a guide for the reader to follow along and keep track of the players. The list lays out everyone—hence “all the President’s men”—that were involved in any of Nixon’s suspicious activity that have since been lumped under the umbrella of Watergate. Woodward and Bernstein included everyone: Nixon’s “men,” the burglars, the prosecution, the judge, senators involved and the Post editors. In a way, it was a mystery that the reader already knew the answer to, but was more intrigued by the process of behind solving the case.

Once the book was for sale, it became the fastest selling hardcover in American history to date. Woodward and Bernstein did not stop there, with *All the President’s Men* continuing to rank high in the paperback charts in 1976, and their new book, *The Final Days*, becoming the new bestselling hardcover. Both of these books gave Americans something the average media could

29 Shepard, “Off the Record,” 57.

30 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, ii.

not—a look behind the curtain of what occurred in the newsroom. The entire entity of news was polished on the surface, without exposing the chaos of production. The public sees the fresh-off-the-press newspapers each day, but less of the stress and crunching for deadlines in the newsroom. With broadcast journalism, the public views what comes on TV, but less of what goes on in the production room.

Behind-the-scene books, documentaries, television shows and movies have remained on the map since the release of *All the President’s Men*. But before the book, popular culture had never received an inside look into Woodward and Bernstein’s personal lives. The book did not make the lives of these reporters seem easy or glamorous either— that was more the film adaptation. The reporters really conveyed the stress they were under when writing about Watergate and dealing with such a high caliber story. This stress and dirty work is another compelling aspect of their journey that attracted readers. The public took the news media at the surface level, consuming stories and either obtaining the knowledge or forgetting about them. The most they thought about reporters was just an imagined newsroom and people typing away on typewriters. The book got down to the gritty details, conveying the pressure felt from editors constantly and the great lengths they went to in order to get the story.

The entire book is an example of these, but there were monumental moments where they really pushed the envelope. Woodward’s meetings with Deep Throat were one of the riskiest parts of Watergate because it was questionable to use anonymous sources in such pressing stories.

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and meeting with him was rather dangerous. He was a source in the executive branch and could only be contacted on very important occasions. They would meet in secret locations, often in an underground parking garage and set up the meetings with secret signals, such as placing a flag in a flowerpot or leaving notes in newspapers delivered to their homes. This connection really propelled the Watergate research and investigation, and without the tips from Deep Throat, Woodward and Bernstein would definitely not have been able to complete their stories as quickly, let alone at all.

Deep Throat was another selling point of *All the President’s Men*. It became a national guessing game of who the anonymous source was, and if he actually existed or was a fictional character used to push Woodward’s stories to press. The use of his tips was allowed after the first couple of stories due to their accuracies. The editors took a major risk in allowing an anonymous source to be the pinnacle aspect of a story and the tips the source was giving to be taken as fact. There is much conversation in the book between the writers and editors about the ethics and integrity of using confidential sources. Putting a name on a fact gives it legitimacy and traceability. It also takes the pressure off the paper. But anonymous sources are risky, and can often be seen as a cop out, causing readers to question the story. It also opens the door for the

34 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 93.


36 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 42.

critic of the stories, in this case the White House, to deny the validity, which they did, until they no longer could deny the stories.

As a reader, beginning the book with knowledge of the outcome is also beneficial for Woodward and Bernstein. When the book was published, Nixon was at a low point in his presidency. His integrity was being questioned at every turn and the public was upset with his corruptness as a leader. Between the events of Watergate, from the break in to the Democratic National Convention Headquarters to the misappropriation of campaign funds, Nixon was already villainized in the public eye. Woodward and Bernstein had arrived at the path of heroism and *All the President’s Men* was their vessel down that path. While the book really put them on the popular culture map as a must-read for political junkies and those following the scandal, it was the film that truly brought Woodward and Bernstein from famous journalists to national celebrities.

**Section II: THE FILM**
“Folks may be getting fuzzy about the Watergate details, but at least they remember the movie: a couple of nosy journalists and an informer, wasn’t it? Next question”

- Wilfred Sheed

The book version of *All the President’s Men* introduced Woodward and Bernstein into the public spotlight, but it was the film that truly propelled them into popular culture. The movie was easily accessible when it was released, and exposed the story of investigating Watergate that so many Americans had been following in real time. The film made visible what the book lacked in crafting the narrative of the two writers. Woodward and Bernstein’s journey was one of heroic measure in which two underdog reporters were up against a major governmental force outside of the average citizen’s knowledge.

After the 1974 release of the book, the film was released shortly after in 1976. Watergate was still a hot topic even two years after the resignation of Nixon, so the movie sparked public interest in the scandal that may have dimmed since two years earlier. The film was directed by Alan J. Pakula and brought major star power to the silver screen. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein were played by movie stars Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, respectively.

In 1972, the journalism duo had a particularly fascinated reader of their work. Redford took great interest to following their reporting, and from the first of their major articles thought the story could make an amazing film. But according to Redford, it was not the corrupt White House or President that intrigued him—it was the unlikely duo of Woodward and Bernstein. Redford thought there was a narrative in their experience that had potential to be morphed into a

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great Hollywood story.\textsuperscript{40} So when Redford heard they were planning on publishing a book, he was ecstatic. He contacted, or almost harassed, the two about buying the rights to the book. Finally the journalists agreed, and Redford bought the rights for $450,000, planning on playing Woodward in the proposed film.\textsuperscript{41}

Redford viewed Watergate from a different lens than Woodward and Bernstein. The actor was very interested in the two journalists and their journey throughout the investigation, whereas Woodward and Bernstein were encompassed by the investigation itself and the all the pieces of the puzzle they put together. The book \emph{All the President’s Men} gives all the details (or at least the details Woodward and Bernstein perceived important) revolving around the Watergate investigation, including key details about key players and a well explained unfolding of events. The movie, on the other hand, focuses less on the details of the investigation or the pieces the journalists were working on and gives Watergate from the lens of the story of Woodward and Bernstein.

The difference between the book and film is a subtle, but important one. Turning the book into a movie and not adding or leaving anything out would make for a dry movie that most likely would not have done very well in theaters. Redford wanted to tell the story of the journalists, based on the platform on Watergate.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Shepard, \textit{Woodward and Bernstein}, 125.
\item Robert Redford, \textit{All the President’s Men Revisited: Revisiting Watergate}, Discovery, April 21, 2013, \url{http://www.discovery.com/tv-shows/all-the-presidents-men-revisited/videos/revisiting-watergate/}.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
were not as interesting as the unlikely duo. The underdog coming out on top narrative is what Redford found so attractive because it was a real life triumph, and he wanted to portray that in the film. The movie is hailed as a monumental movie for not only journalists, but investigative journalists in particular. The movie revealed action in the newsroom that many Americans had never seen before, causing “investigative reporting’s glamour to shine even brighter”\(^\text{43}\) than it had with the release of the book. Although it put investigative journalism on the map more so than it had ever been in the past, the film still portrayed the frustration, hard work, challenges and roadblocks the duo faced. The “glamour” aspect may have been derived from the fact that it is a Hollywood film and Redford and Hoffman played the two journalists. The movie glazes over much of the dirty work that the book discusses. But it does show some of the dilemmas they faced: wrong information, limits on information they can acquire, quotations on and off the record, and anonymous sources.

While the movie combines certain facets of the investigation for cinema’s sake, it also dramatizes events. In later interviews post-film release, Woodward confirmed the meetings with Deep Throat in real life were very different than the ones portrayed in the film.\(^\text{44}\) This character of Deep Throat, with his face covered by darkness in a parking garage, and a nervous Woodward meeting with the shrouded figure, added more intrigue about the anonymous source than the book had initially stirred up. This film was different than other biographies or investigative movies—it was multifaceted in the sense that it told the story of Woodward and Bernstein’s


\(^{44}\) Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, interview by David Martin, *‘All the President’s Men’ at 40*, CBS Sunday Morning.

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journey as journalists while the viewers simultaneously learned the details of Watergate events through the lens of the reporters and not from an unbiased, objective point of view.

Pakula’s focus on Woodward and Bernstein was interesting cinematically and prompted success in theaters. But solely focusing on the narrative of the two journalists while they investigated and wrote about Watergate gives the impression that they were the two main characters who solved the entire scandal. They did have a major part in furthering an investigation that may have gone under the radar if it was not for the two, but they definitely were not the sole investigators. Yet, when Watergate is mentioned today, Woodward and Bernstein’s names follow shortly after. The film altered how Americans remember Watergate because it is so easily accessible and omits some of the more complicated details of the investigation that the duo included in their book. Pakula simplified the storyline and steered it more towards the David and Goliath narrative by taking out other key players in the investigation. This altered the angle of examining Watergate from a broad spectrum to a very personal and specific angle through following the two journalists’ journey.

In an essay on representations of the Watergate scandal in Hollywood cinema, Kingsley Marshall states, “This is the strength of the movie [All the President’s Men] as entertainment and its weakness as history because it traded on reliance of the audience’s basic memory of Watergate without explaining its significance.”45 Even in the book, the journalists could not include every detail. But the book is still from their perspective, told in third person, and the film

takes another step back and tells the story from outsiders perspective all together, with Pakula
directing and William Goldman writing the screenplay.

According to Alicia Shepard, “Pakula was celebrated for his thoroughness. He insisted on
spending a few months interviewing Woodward and Bernstein and the women in their lives, their
friends, and Washington Post editors. While Goldman saw the film as a police story, Pakula
imagined it as a personal saga as well.” With Pakula and Goldman at the helm, the story was
gaining more opinion and adding more spin onto the original story. This added input from the
director, screenwriter and their staff for “Hollywood effect” and to tell the story as close to the
truth but alter it slightly for artistic appeal or with the viewer in mind alters what the audience
perceives as truth. While viewers, for the most part, were aware of the actual occurrences of the
investigation, the popularity of the film prompted popular culture to take the events in the film as
reality. As time continues, less and less people read the actual articles from the time, but have
easier access to the movie, carrying the myth of Woodward and Bernstein as heroes of Watergate
down in history.

Watergate was released in theaters on April 9th, 1976, launching the popular culture
phenomenon and the greatest boost in perpetuating the myth of Woodward and Bernstein as
heroes. In an interview, Leonard Downie, Ben Bradlee’s successor, who worked with Woodward
and Bernstein as an editor throughout the investigation, stated, “I want to correct you a little bit
about mythology. The movie was fairly accurate but it did overly focus on just the two reporters.
There were obviously other people involved, editors who were helping them figure things out

46 Shepard, Woodward and Bernstein, 132.
and other reporters who were doing other things. But it was a small group of people against the
government.”47 While the movie did focus on the small versus the large, the David versus the
Goliath, its focus on Woodward and Bernstein’s story triumphed the hard work that many other
journalists performed throughout the investigation.

In a sense, Watergate was the Post’s baby. Bradlee and Graham were hesitant about the
story the entire time, noting its faultiness, especially in the beginning.48 Bradlee was concerned
no other major papers were reporting on the scandal. Of the 433 Washington correspondents, at
most 15 worked full-time on Watergate in the first five months after the break-in, and some of
these only briefly.49 The fact that few journalists were covering this at the time was another
trigger for Redford in focusing on Woodward and Bernstein. The two reporters believed so much
in this story and had the passion to follow it, even when they hit dead end after dead end, was
already the foundation of many Hollywood films, yet they could tag this one as “a true story”.

Although the book was labeled as the real story behind Watergate, the film truly ennobled
investigative reporting and created modern-day heroes out of the journalists. The discrepancies
between the details of the book and the film are mainly attributed to the Hollywood spin on the
book. There are many examples of differences, exaggerations and omissions between the book

47 Schudson, Watergate in American Memory, 108.

48 Katharine Graham, interview by Peter Prichard, “The late Katharine Graham on the 25th Anniversary of
the Watergate scandal,” Newseum, June 12, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAJf8Sx4c0M.

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and the film, and some are the most telling of why Woodward and Bernstein have traveled down in history with the spotlight.

The ability to put a face to the Watergate journalistic work was easy for the public to do, and with a much bigger presence in pop culture than any of the other reporters or editors that worked on Watergate, the aspect of public memory presents itself in a major way when speaking about Watergate in a contemporary setting. The influence on the public can be seen by the major rise in book sales of *All the President’s Men*, especially once the movie came out, which is when book sales exploded. Shepard puts the sales into perspective with sale quantities, stating, “By April, things were crazy. Simon & Schuster had already upped its print run from 35,000 to 75,000. In April, they bumped it up to 100,000 copies. Three weeks before the book’s official publication date, June 18, 1974, Simon & Schuster had printed 210,000 books.” People knew what was happening with Watergate as it was unfolding right before their eyes in the paper and on the news. And the insider’s look at the investigation only added to the hype. The public was fascinated with the idea of what went on behind the scenes and getting an inside look at such a shocking scandal as seen by the skyrocketing sales in the book.

One of the major issues with the movie was the lack of giving credit to those deserving of it. Redford was most intrigued by Woodward and Bernstein, and from the beginning wanted the movie to be focused on them. Adding too many different characters and details may cause the audience to get lost and lose the main narrative he was aiming to portray with the film. But

50 Shepard, *Woodward and Bernstein*, 89.

51 Shepard, *Woodward and Bernstein*, 89.

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because this was based on real events, the omission of characters left certain major players in the actual investigation pretty rattled.

Out of those forgotten in the film or their actual role given less significant weight, the most upset were editors Barry Sussman and Howard Simons. Sussman was given no role in the movie whatsoever, and Simons, who was known as someone to play an integral role of challenging stories up until press time, was given a rather laid back, silent role. This was a slap in the face to the editors, who at the time faced just as much pressure as Woodward and Bernstein did. Although it was the writers that were mainly performing the dirty work, the editors carried national pressure on their shoulders. With Watergate being such a touchy investigation, if the paper published anything too risky or undeveloped, they would have to face the wrath of not only the government, but the entire country as well.

Woodward had the connection with Deep Throat, and could only reveal to the editors that he was extremely trustworthy and of very high stature in the government. The nickname was thought up by the editors, and given to the unknown source because Woodward claimed he could not reveal his identity because he was on “deep background”. Not soon after that, managing editor Howard Simons jokingly dubbed him “Deep Throat.” He was extremely cautious of meeting up with Bernstein, and would often meet with him in peculiar and secluded spots at odd hours of the night. The movie does a great job of portraying the process in which Woodward and Deep Throat met, because it was up to Hollywood standards. When Deep Throat had new

52 Shepard, “Off the Record”, 62.

53 Bernstein and Woodward. All the President’s Men, 120.

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information or wanted to warn Bernstein of something would often write the location in the newspaper delivered to Bernstein’s house that morning. When that got too suspicious and Deep Throat feared he was being followed, their signaling became more discrete: “Deep Throat didn’t want to use the phone even to set up meetings. He suggested Woodward open the drapes in his apartment as a signal. Deep Throat could check each day; if the drapes were open, the two would meet that night.” Along with placing a red flag in a flowerpot, these were the ways the two communicated in hopes of never being caught. Woodward and Deep Throat went through their ups and downs throughout the investigation, when Woodward pushed too hard and requested too much, Deep Throat would pull back and go off the grid for a while. Deep Throat knew how to work the system and Woodward was cautious of pushing too hard because this was one of his best sources.

Of course, the movie glamourized Deep Throat, presenting him as a shrouded figure with a raspy voice, often smoking. The conversations were hushed and very serious in the movie, as they most likely were in real life. But the cinematographic effects only escalated the suspense of the scene and the investigation as a whole. The dark lighting and shadowed faces intrigued audiences and pushed the “suspense” aspect of the film. The film noir aura of the scene prompted audiences to view it as a thriller and associate it with suspense. This approach at filming the car garage scenes where Woodward meets up with Deep Throat really attempt to portray the pressure and danger the reporters were feeling. It also presents the severity of the

54 Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President’s Men*, 170.

55 “AFI’s 100 Years . . . 100 Heroes & Villains,” American Film Institute, last modified 2007, accessed November 15, 2015, [http://www.afi.com/100Years/handv.aspx](http://www.afi.com/100Years/handv.aspx)
situation they were in and magnitude of the force the reporters were up against. While the storyline focuses on Woodward and Bernstein, the elusive government seems to always be watching, which is why Woodward and Deep Throat can only meet at odd hours of the night and Woodward is seen taking numerous cabs to the destination to cover all of his tracks. The paranoia the characters are experiencing and caution they are taking also prompt a thriller reaction from the audience.

Deep Throat only adds to the myth of Woodward and Bernstein, perpetuating his own “sub-myth” as well. The question of Deep Throat actually existing turned into a national guessing game after the book and film were released. There have been plenty of other important unnamed sources that gave journalists and news outlets vital information often exposing corruption or other scandals. But most of them were not given aliases by the Post and did not become a character in books and films. Deep Throat became part of Woodward and Bernstein’s myth because this too was easily accessible and fun in a way for popular culture to solve. A woman from New York wrote into the Washington Post after reading the book, “Consider this a fan letter- or better yet, a note of overwhelming gratitude . . . I’d send “Deep Throat” a thank you letter too—if I knew where to address it!” Popular culture ate the suspense of the meetings right up, and thus Deep Throat won a spot in the memory of Watergate.

Pakula was very deliberate with the way he filmed the movie. The wide-spanning shots of the newsroom (which was in fact not the actual Post newsroom but rather a Hollywood set


because the paper would not allow filming in the newsroom)\textsuperscript{58} where Woodward and Bernstein were typing away on the loud typewriters and alone gave the feeling of two small reporters up against a great task. It consumed the viewer and portrayed the underdog overcoming the powerful greater power that many took away a fairytale, heroic storyline from the movie. Swiss director, Marc Forster, describes the scene as, “When you see Redford and Hoffman in a long-shot in this massive space, it gives you a feeling of two little people working against the system, which is that archetypical story of the underdog going against the big machine. That David-and-Goliath principle always works.”\textsuperscript{59}

The wide-shot newsroom scenes were not the only scenes that portrayed the ‘small versus large’ theme that Pakula was aiming to portray through his strategically shot scenes. The scene in the Library of Congress is another iconic scene that with no dialogue, allows the viewer to absorb the pressure that the two reporters were facing. The reporters are going through each slip of checked out books over the past two years to uncover details of the investigation. The very quiet background music, along with the shuffling of the individual cards and the large piles of cards to go through, display the dedication the reporters had to the task at hand. The filming of the scene also relates back to the ‘small versus large’ demeanor of the film as the shot cranes higher and higher from a bird’s eye view.

\textsuperscript{58} Marshall, “The Cinematic Watergate: From All the President’s Men to Frost/Nixon,” in Watergate Remembered, 172.

The scene lacking dialogue is also key, because it allows for the viewer to interpret the intensity of the search for these checked out books as a very important key to the story. It displays their dedication to the investigation and puts into perspective what they were really up against. At this point in the movie, although viewers knew the final outcome, the journalists were still only on the surface of the investigation. They were pulling at leads, but using their time to search through thousands of library slips. The scene shows desperation, but also foreshadows what the two would shortly uncover. The Library of Congress aerial crane shot takes the investigation as a whole, and in the ten seconds that the camera pans, represents Woodward and Bernstein’s Watergate experience. With every new tip, they would uncover something bigger, until finally the clues led to the highest office— the president.

The way Pakula filmed the scenes was deliberate to portray the David-Goliath theme, therefore furthering the heroic label that Woodward and Bernstein have been given by popular culture. Without ever explicitly stating that the journalists were heroes or single-handedly solved Watergate, the focus on the two reporters isolates their story from other reporters and other players in the game. Goldman strategically wrote the screenplay focusing on Woodward and Bernstein as well, and at Redford’s request the film was to portray the two journalists’ journey throughout the investigation and not center on the investigation itself. These aspects also furthered the myth of Woodward and Bernstein as the heroes of the investigation and becoming the face of cracking Watergate.

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60 Marshall, “The Cinematic Watergate: From All the President’s Men to Frost/Nixon,” in Watergate Remembered, 169.
The wide shots and aerial views portrayed the journalists as the underdog and small players versus the world, but those were not the only scenes that built suspense. Some of the most suspenseful scenes in the movie, aside from the meetings with Deep Throat, are the awkward encounter with the sources and those that work in the government. In one unnerving scene where Woodward and Bernstein approach a secretary at her home that works in an office of a government employee involved in the scandal, the paranoia is portrayed very well. The woman barely opens the door and begs the reporters to leave because “they” might be watching. The door is very symbolic for the amount of roadblocks, or “closed doors”, the two reporters encounter throughout their investigation. The reporters’ determination displays another heroic trait of the reporters that viewers took away with them after seeing the movie. The resilience the reporters face after being knocked down and never giving up is admirable and furthered the reputation of the two as heroes.

In all the other interviews with government employees the tension in the rooms is uncomfortable to watch and portrays to the viewers the awkward situations the reporters encountered and the perseverance they sustained throughout the investigation. Their resilient effort to get details out of the employees leaves the viewers uncomfortable, yet impressed simultaneously. Goldman gets across the unwillingness and paranoia of the employees towards the government, exposing a side of Watergate that many people did not see through the stories that ran in the papers and on the news. In one scene, Woodward and Bernstein pursue a source they believe can give them a major lead. By mistake, her mother lets them in to talk to her daughter who works for the administration and she is not pleased. The hesitation the employees
had in talking to the journalists exposes what was actually happening behind the scenes of the government.

On the surface, the White House was calm, cool and collected, denying any stories the Post published and calling them absurd. America could not see the tension and turmoil behind the scenes, and the movie exposed that. These scenes were groundbreaking because, aside from the details in the book, they were the first time the mass of America was exposed to what people truly went through during the investigation. Tension was sky-high in the government, and viewers could feel that through watching the encounters and interviews between Woodward and Bernstein and those they were trying to obtain information from.

The film was the key to Woodward and Bernstein maintaining their status as American legends, not only in journalism but also in American history. The story’s canonical storyline and focus on Woodward and Bernstein created an understandable story out of a complicated scandal with many players and details. People may not remember the details of Watergate or the main characters in the scandal, but All the President’s Men has remained relevant due to the iconic status of the movie and the groundbreaking approach to the story. The film is actually the story of the two reporters throughout the investigation and the narrative of their experiences, but it is often categorized as a film about Watergate.

The Watergate scandal is the foundation of the film, because without that the reporters would have no story to report on, but the movie actually focuses on the two writers. Because of this, viewers walked away with the perspective that Woodward and Bernstein saved the day and toppled the Nixon administration single handedly. The memory of the two journalists has been carried down throughout history by means of the film, which is often used to educate about xxxvii
Watergate in schools and closely associated with the scandal. The message the movie sends is the heroism of the two journalists and their hard work they persevered through, sending the message to younger generations that these two journalists brought down the Nixon administration and glosses over the actual historical happenings.

Section III: POST-WATERGATE FAME

Woodward and Bernstein did not expect their stories to propel them to the level of fame they received post-Watergate.\(^{61}\) In fact, it was not their stories in the Post that gained them

\(^{61}\) Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, interview by David Martin, ‘All the President’s Men’ at 40.
national recognition. While their book only put them on the map, the movie is truly what propelled them into popular culture fame. Woodward and Bernstein paint a humble picture of themselves in the book, pointing out flaws and obvious journalistic mistakes. But they were not afraid to speak out on the credit they believed they deserved. When the Pulitzer Prize was awarded to the *Washington Post* as an entirety for their investigative work on Watergate, rather than just the two reporters, a former editorial-board member recalled, “the boys came pounding into my office: ‘Can you imagine they did this to us? We gotta quit.’”

Colleagues and peers remembered the two journalists’ frustration with not receiving more credit with the award, but they would soon receive more fame as time carried on than any Pulitzer Prize could supply. At the time, not receiving a Pulitzer individually felt as if they were robbed. But with *All the President’s Men* continuing to fly off the shelves, a second book, *The Final Days*, in the works and a film on the way, Woodward and Bernstein were planting the seeds to be remembered by society through film through the widespread success and rising popularity of their books.

Once the film *All the President’s Men* was released in theaters, the journalists’ names gained iconic status. They were in great demand at colleges and universities, and hopped on the lecture circuit with the American Program Bureau. The program was run by Robert Walker, and


63 Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, interview by David Martin, ‘*All the President’s Men*’ at 40.

64 Shepard, *Woodward and Bernstein*, 89.
when asked about the two he said, “In 1973, who knew how the story would break? No one knew their names. They were just two reporters, but as the story got bigger, everybody wanted to hear from them. People wanted to know what was going on. It was just weird. They had more dates than they could even handle. And this was before the movie.”65 The rise to fame was propelled by their book, and the movie brought even more attention to the book. Popular culture used its powerful influence to place a face on the Watergate investigative journalism work, and with a much bigger presence, due to their book and movie, than any of the other reporters or editors that worked on Watergate, they became the poster children for the scandal.

As they gained recognition, their speaker fees at colleges and conferences increased from $1,200 or $2,000 to $7,500 for each lecture.66 And by the 30th anniversary, their agent at the time proclaimed, “Woodward’s minimum speaker fee is $10,000, and it rises to $50,000, depending on how far he has to travel. Bernstein gets between $10,000 and $15,000, speaking fifteen times a year about what he sees as the sorry state of the media.”67 The difference between the two is also noteworthy. Bernstein did not handle the attention and fame as well as Woodward. He took to destructive vices and partied too much, often going off the grid for weeks or months at a time.68 Woodward remained in the journalism spotlight more so than Bernstein, publishing books

65 Shepard, Woodward and Bernstein, 84.

66 Shepard, Woodward and Bernstein, 85.

67 Shepard, Woodward and Bernstein, 84.

68 Shepard, Woodward and Bernstein, 121.
and writing articles to keep his career going, remaining relevant in the grand scheme of journalism.

With the increase in fame, the public demanded more of the two men. People were fascinated by the glamour the Hollywood film created of the story. The movie in itself was not very glamorous, and showed the two reporters at some of their lowest points, but because it was churned through the Hollywood machine and placed on a big screen, the two reporters were suddenly celebrities. While the actors, Redford and Hoffman, were filming the movie in a scene at the Post’s office building in 1975, high school students were touring the building. One student “spotted Robert Redford standing in an office. They rushed forward, pocket cameras clicking. ‘Wait,’ a reporter said to them, ‘Here's the real Bob Woodward. Don't you want a picture of him?’ ‘No,’ one youngster replied, and they rushed on.”

Popular culture was enamored with the idea of celebrity, and Woodward and Bernstein were bringing celebrity culture to a field not usually associated with fame—investigative journalism.

Hollywood and production companies everywhere had caught the investigative journalism bug. They noticed the major buzz the book and film were creating, and went along with the trend. Detective shows and films, and television shows and films portraying newspaper writers, were somewhat popular in the early days of television. But between 1964 and 1974, no television dramas were based in newsrooms.70 In the four years after Nixon’s resignation and the


70 Marshall, Watergate’s Legacy and the Press, 135.
Watergate scandal, five shows about fictional reporters debuted. The shows that emerged post-Watergate included *Lou Grant*, which aired in 1977 and ran until 1982. The show was a spinoff of The Mary Tyler Moore show and followed a newspaper editor and his team at the fictional *Los Angeles Tribune* through the ups and downs of reporting and the world of media. There were characters that were based off of Katharine Graham at the *Post* and other journalists that emerged during the “golden era.”

Other shows used the Woodward-Bernstein hero-journalist foundation and put an even greater Hollywood twist on it. *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* aired in 1974 on ABC and focused on Carl Kolchak, a Las Vegas reporter who followed up investigating and solving crimes the police could not solve. Although it only ran for 20 episodes, the influence of the new investigative journalism fad is represented with the emergence of this show. The explosion of journalism in pop culture as a new sexy, intriguing and risky occupation only propelled the narrative of Woodward and Bernstein and carried out the myth of heroism.

These television programs were possible to create not only because of the interest and demand from the public, but people had little insight into the behind the scenes action of a newsroom. The news occurred and was printed soon after, but the writing and action in between was unknown to popular culture. Woodward and Bernstein’s book pulled back the curtain and exposed the life of an investigative journalist using the Watergate investigation as a vessel. This inside look into not only the details of the investigation, but the details of the *process* fascinated

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the public. Programs and films focusing on the newsroom took a different perspective that was attractive and greatly influenced the future of programming and films regarding journalism. No longer were programs solely about the detective unmasking the villain, but about the process. The film had a detective or cop narrative weaved into the storyline, but added the flair of journalism and the aspect of the underdog, which attracted audiences and left them intrigued and interested to view more. The duo not only influenced television and film, but also brought new interest to the field of investigative journalism. In speeches and guest appearances, Woodward and Bernstein recalled the large turnouts, especially at universities. At one school, they asked the audience how many students wanted to be investigative journalists, and more than half of the auditorium raised their hands.73

The two men had sparked a phenomenon of interest in the journalism field unintentionally. They launched a movement of interest from students and young professionals in the field of journalism. Their impact on journalism is an entire study on its own, but this impact all stems from the material they published for the world—the books and the film. They gave popular culture content that was easy to follow, suspenseful, intriguing and sexy. This combination, along with the major attraction factor of their ‘underdog’ narrative, was a recipe for success for the two journalists.

Another factor of their staying power in popular culture is the anniversaries of the book and film. The fact that their work has an anniversary sends a message to the public in itself- this book is important and it is the 25th, 30th, 40th anniversary of a monumental achievement in

73 Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, interview by David Martin, ‘All the President’s Men’ at 40.
journalism. The major anniversaries remind the public of the importance of the investigation and film, but with time, the memory of Watergate has become less oriented with the actual events and details, and more associated with what was created out of the scandal—the book and film. Although, these anniversaries do not mark the date of Nixon’s resignation or the major publication of a groundbreaking article, such as the case with the Pentagon Papers or other journalistic work. They mark the release of the book, *All the President’s Men*, which led to the film that both had such a lasting impact on popular culture. Why 1974 is the official Watergate year also speaks to the impact Woodward and Bernstein have on the remembrance of the scandal, because the actual break in occurred in 1972 and while Nixon did resign in 1974 as well, the ‘anniversary of All the President’s Men and Watergate’ is usually celebrated among the media and popular culture. In 2014, on the 40th anniversary of *All the President’s Men* book release, Simon & Schuster published a “40th Anniversary Edition”, altering the cover art and title of the book. The original 1974 hardcover edition was blue with “All the President’s Men” on the side in gold lettering. The 40th anniversary paperback now had the title blown up on the cover, with “The Greatest Reporting Story of All Time” directly underneath the title.

This slight addition to the title displays how the publishing company has used the legacy and the iconic status of the book to popularize it even more around the anniversaries and market it in an appealing and patriotic way. Dubbing the book as “The Greatest Reporting Story of All Time” plays along with the narrative of Woodward and Bernstein as heroes. The style of the book cover is extravagant, with stars and donning the patriotic colors of red, white, and blue, but the characters never boast of their heroism in the book and rather set it up through the
introduction with humility. The cover tells a different story than the contents of the book and sends a vibrant message to the reader.

The aspect of public memory presents itself in a major way when recalling Watergate in a contemporary setting. The legacy of Woodward and Bernstein is consumed by their book and film, and less by their actual journalistic work at The Washington Post. The book and film set the foundation for Woodward and Bernstein’s rise to fame, and whenever the two are in an interview or speaking, the book and film are usually discussed or mentioned as an introduction to their work at the Post, because this is what popular culture is most familiar with, and most interested in. Just as the high school boy dismissed the real Woodward in the Post newsroom and went straight for Redford, this displays popular cultures tendency to consume more popularized stories and legends, and glaze over complicated stories. The legacy that Woodward and Bernstein maintain is simple in its origin—an underdog duo outsmarts and essentially disbands the monstrous Nixon government.
Section IV: SPOTLIGHT

“‘Spotlight’ joins ‘All the President’s Men’ in the pantheon of great journalism movies” - The Washington Post

“Spotlight is undoubtedly this generation’s All the President’s Men, showing the cinematic greatness that can happen when talented actors are paired with a story that needs to be told” - USA Today

“Spotlight is this generation’s All the President’s Men, nostalgic enough to remind us of microfiche but timely enough to influence the very story that it depicts” - Religion & Politics

After the release of the movie Spotlight in November 2015, critics everywhere dubbed it this generation’s All the President’s Men. The allusion to the 1976 film only proves the cultural impact it made and precedent it set as one of the greatest journalism movies of all time. Spotlight

74 Hornaday, review of Spotlight (film), Washington Post.

75 Brian Truitt, review of Spotlight (film), directed by Tom McCarthy, USA Today, (November 6, 2015), http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/2015/11/05/review-spotlight-movie/75238122/.

follows journalists at The Boston Globe as they uncover the mass scandal of sexual abuse and misconduct in the Catholic Church in Boston and around the globe. The spotlight team includes four investigative journalists that uncover corruption or scandal, but they had never faced any story of this measure. The investigation is prompted by a new editor of the paper who urges the team to look into the court cases of the victims and any signs of cover up by the Catholic Church. The reporters are flabbergasted at first, because they are all native Bostonians and realize the power and control the Catholic Church has in Boston.

The similarities between the movies are numerous, and also telling of the influence All the President’s Men had on journalists and investigative journalism, and the representation of journalism from a Hollywood perspective. In a way, All the President’s Men captured investigative journalists doing their job, so logically the two films would have similarities. But in this case, All the President’s Men set a standard for investigative journalism and a mold that journalists from then on would fill in. The narratives are very similar, which explains viewers and critics automatic connection and comparison to All the President’s Men. Both sets of journalists are not renowned in the beginning, but rather just average investigative journalists. They’re faced with a task that initially seems menial, but grows into something larger than they imagined.

Both have the David and Goliath archetype at play; Spotlight with facing the monstrosity that is the Catholic Church, and All the President’s Men dealing with a seemingly unstoppable Nixon administration. Both “Goliaths” hold enumerable power in their respective spheres, and both papers are in the heat of the scandals geographically- The Washington Post, located in the nation’s capital, where much of the scandal unraveled and The Boston Globe in Boston, where
almost 53% of the population was Catholic in 2003\textsuperscript{77}, and exposed such a prized institution. The geographical proximity to the scandals is plausible, with Watergate in the political capital of the country and the abuse scandal in a major Catholic city, but also portrays another similarity.

The plot twists that captivate the audience are similar as well. In both films it usually involves the journalists grappling with the severity of the information they are uncovering. In \textit{Spotlight}, this moment comes with statistics and numbers, when they realize actually how many priests were involved in the sexual abuse of the parishioners, and the mass cover up job by the Archdioceses of Boston. Both of the films convey the “golden age” of journalism, \textit{All the President’s Men} more so than \textit{Spotlight}, but contemporary news and media is consumed and completely carried out through technology. The fascination with the personal narratives of the characters is partially due to the journalists’ dedication and drive to investigating.

In \textit{All the President’s Men}, the Library of Congress scene where Woodward and Bernstein are sifting through massive amounts of check out slips directly mirrors the scene in \textit{Spotlight} where the journalists go through every parish directory of priests to figure out the pattern of parish reassignment and cover up by the Catholic Church. The \textit{Boston Globe} reporters take out many directories and use rulers to go down the directory of priests name by name, searching for clues of reassignment that may be due to sexual abuse. This meticulous work portrays the notion

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{“Statistics by Diocese by Catholic Population,” Catholic Hierarchy}, last revised 2005, accessed February 17, 2015, \url{http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/scus1.html}. 
of hard work and dedication, giving the viewer a sense of nostalgia and a taste of what journalism was like before the internet affected the field.

The perseverance of the journalists through the investigation is also an admirable quality that promotes relatability among view. Their tenacity while attempting to find people who will speak on the issues involved in both the scandals is uncomfortable to watch, but speaks to the greater issue of how bad these scandals were. In *All the President's Men*, Woodward and Bernstein attempt to speak with current and ex-government employees, which very few of them were cooperative. The journalists in *Spotlight* run into similar problems, with people refusing to talk and slamming doors in their faces. The montage style of filming the scenes where the journalists are repeatedly being rejected while pursuing interviews portrays an admirable quality of perseverance and adds to the “heroic” qualities the writers have. Through the ups and downs of the investigation, they overcame the obstacles and ended up on top.

The films follow generally the same storyline and are unique because they tell a larger story of Watergate and the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church through the lens of personal narratives of the journalists. The historical details are simplified by the shift in perspectives and by focusing on the journalists and their story of investigating the scandals, the films become relatable and more intriguing to the public than if they were informational films meant to inform the viewer on every detail of the scandals. By focusing on the journalists working and following their personal stories, a human element is added that is more enticing and memorable.

Both films have an already known ending, but the viewer is invested in the *process* of the journalists’ investigative work and how they uncovered all of the corruption in the major
institutions. Spotlight’s findings are slightly more morally unsettling, as they deal with the sexual abuse by priests of children in the Boston area, whereas All the President’s Men deals with misallocated campaign funds and corruption in the government. Yet the unveiling of the corruption in both films gives the viewer a sense of justice and satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

As displayed by the research and examples in this thesis, Woodward and Bernstein have maintained a presence in popular culture due to the myth that America has crafted about them as a result of the book and film, All the President’s Men. The myth captures the notion that the duo cracked Watergate, because their book combined with the film’s focus on the two characters’ stories cast the focus on them and place all the other players in the investigation in the background.

The David and Goliath archetype that the film depicts attracted viewers and kept their status as legendary. The underdog overcoming the greater power is material of legends, and set Woodward and Bernstein up for iconic status among popular culture. The story of the Watergate and the Catholic Church abuse scandal are incidents that were hidden from the public for so long and reached great levels of corruption, so it adds to the magnitude and mythos of the scandals.
The book put Woodward and Bernstein on the map and the film popularized them among the public. Their post-Watergate fame only perpetuated this myth and increased demand from the public. The focus on the duo began the process of mythologizing Watergate and pinning the reporters as the poster children of solving the scandal. Because of this, they set a foundation for the “correct” way to carry out investigative journalism and created a model for incoming journalists to aspire to.

Although their influence on journalism as an institution has been covered and studied by scholars, their influence on journalists today would be an interesting future study. With all of the technology influencing media today and the twenty-four hour news cycle, do current journalists look to Woodward and Bernstein for inspiration in their work ethic and manner? Or do they seem them as part of the ‘golden age’ of journalism that will never been seen again? Taking a look at how today’s media influences the ways contemporary journalists operate and how they view history of journalism would be an interesting topic and speak to the greater truth of the evolution of journalism.

I began writing my thesis in the right place at the right time, as Spotlight proved to be a perfect comparison to All the President’s Men the film. This project would have been too great to complete in one year, but looking at the evolution of the representation of journalism, specifically investigative, through television shows and movies would be interesting. I mention in Section III a few shows that were aired after Watergate and Woodward and Bernstein’s work, and their influence is evident. With television shows like Newsroom appearing today, the influence journalism, and now more so media as an entity (combining broadcast, print, digital and social), has on television and the way the media is portrayed to the people through these
shows would speak to the public’s perception and what production companies, writers and Hollywood think of the media.

These are just some unanswered questions and possible ideas I had for further projects and research while completing my thesis. With every major anniversary of Watergate to come, the myth of Woodward and Bernstein will most certainly live on in the popular imagination.

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