

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the two novels, All the King's Men and All the President's Men, both of them obviously spot on the topic of the relationship between the government, the mass media, and the People in the American democracy. Government is shown to be an institution whose power is derived from the People. Whenever the People find it necessary to take the power from the government, they have an absolute power to do it. In All the King's Men, the relationship between the governor and his people is depicted as a smooth and harmonious one. Willie Stark, the governor of the State is favored by his People for his charismatic and excellent image; his 'clean' history has apparently grown confidence and comfort in the heart of the people. Meanwhile, in All the President's Men, the relationship between President Nixon and the People is depicted to fall apart. Nixon fails to keep his image clean in the eyes of the public. His 'sin' has been cultivated so deeply in the people's mind that they lose trust and confidence in him, which draws him to the public rejection.

The success and failure of the relationship are significantly determined by the People's perception about the image of the leaders. Willie Stark is successful

in establishing his career by focusing his efforts on building his image by releasing populist policies. Moreover, to keep himself favorable, Stark manages his underlinks to handle his wrongdoings so that they will not come up into publication. Not knowing the true facts of Stark, the People are misled to a perception that Stark is their true choice since he looks honest and accountable.

Unlike Stark, the relationship between President Nixon and the People is undermined because the public perception of his image has shifted by the 'negative' publication on him. The disclosure of Nixon's attempt to cheat to win the election has given a wake-up call for the People that the accountability of this leader should be questioned. With the publication, the People are shaped to see him no longer as a respected leader but only as a 'criminal'. Not being able to fit the People standard, they reject Nixon to continue his presidency.

It proves that public perception on the leaders' image has undeniably driven public sentiment. What the People see and hear about their leaders influences their likeness and confidence in them. According to the American democracy, whenever the People lose their confidence in the government, they have the right to discontinue the government's career. In Willie Stark's version, he is able to establish public confidence by giving his people no reason for not loving him. He was absent of ill-publication, which can only make the People focus on his outstanding performance. On the other hand, Nixon loses public confidence owing to the fact that his publicly-known misconduct has stuck to public opinion that the People cannot turn away from his sin without raising against it.

According to the analysis of both novels, the shaping process of public perception upon the leaders owes to the contribution of the mass media. Carrying their duty as a reliable source for the People, mass media provide information for the public about the government's performance so that the People are able to judge the accountability of their representatives. The People rely on the press information to get the picture of how the government works. They watch the government through what is presented by the press. In All the King's Men, Stark is depicted to be a strong and very powerful governor that he is able to suppress the press so that it does not dare to uncover his wrongdoings. With his power, Stark succeeds in creating a 'sympathetic' relationship with the mass media; yet, it only means that the media agree to be put under his control. As a result, his dirt is successfully covered-up from the public. The public's missing of Stark's mistakes has brought him a huge advantage; the people are not aware of his violating the American basic values. The people think Stark goes right. Their positive sentiment on Stark's image successfully brings him victory on the re-election. On the other way round, Nixon does not experience such relationship with the press. His power as a president is unable to put his control over the press. Nixon faces an adverse relationship with the press instead: it is the press which is described to have a powerful control over the government. The impact of the press' influence is proved when the press discovers Nixon's cheats; the People reward him a negative response that destroys his career. The public awareness which is provoked by the continual publication on Nixon's wrongdoings generates negative public sentiment on him. The sentiment eventually urges the Congress to get Nixon impeached.

From what is described above, it can be concluded that democracy works well when the mass media's attitude is adverse to the government. The attitude is expected to keep the media being critical of the accountability of the government so that it may keep the government from misusing the power by generating public awareness. On the other way round, the democracy will never meet its ultimate goal when the mass media are sympathetic to the government because the attitude will allow the government to be too powerful that it might ignore the People's wishes and interests. Being sympathetic means the mass media do not side with the People, which is totally wrong in the American democracy because the mass media is supposed to watch the government's performance for the sake of the People's interest. If the attitude is allowed, the control over the government will be weak and it might endanger the essence of democracy which says that the power should belong to the People.

As the politicians rely on the mass media to promote their popularity, the media hold the key of determining the relationship quality between the politicians and the People. As the mandated agents, the leaders have to be aware of their accountability to fulfill their responsibility to the People. The media carries the duty of testing the accountability. When the politicians fail to show themselves clean in the publication, it will be unlucky for them because the People will instantly judge their accountability based on the press' report. The instantly-shaped perception would then trigger a negative response from the public which might destroy the popularity of the government. Noting that the role of the press is crucial, the best suggestion for the politicians to keep their popularity is to promote their goodness and to keep themselves away from 'negative' publication.

From what is promoted by the two novels, it is obvious that the Americans have certain values to examine the accountability of their leaders. The Americans strongly believe that honesty, openness, and integrity would be the most reliable values to measure the accountability of their representatives. These values are seemingly expected to guarantee the endurance of the American democracy.

The Americans' faith on the values can also be seen in the way their press acts. The transparency in managing the country becomes the most demanded thing for the People because this is the easiest way to examine the representatives' performance, whether the government is straight or not. An attempt to cover up the truth would be seen as a public lie. And it risks public distrust in the government. The openness in running the governmental duties is also the reason why the press in America is very critical on their politicians. To show how serious the Americans are in implementing their democracy, they give the press a great extent of freedom to examine the accountability of the politicians. The gathering of as much as possible information is regarded substantial because the press' report will be responsible for the shaping of public opinion.

The mechanism of a democratic system can be summed up as the following order: the People who own the country agree to delegate the government the power to manage it. The relationship resembles the owner and its manager. The owner is free to hire and to fire his manager according to his will. As the mandated institution, the government is responsible to use the power for the good of the People. To guarantee that the power is used properly, the People need an agent to supervise the government's performance. The duty is well accepted by mass media. Acting as the sole reliable source, the People depend on

the media's report to judge their representatives. Their response on the report will determine the government's career.

At last, I conclude that the two novels have a different attitude in promoting the American democracy. In All the King's Men, Robert Penn Warren seems to see it pessimistically. From what is presented by the story, we are introduced to an idea that politics is always filled with dirt. No matter how ideal the philosophy on which the politics is built, everyone who has joined in must have 'sinned' and politics has left no honest man. Only a smart and brave person can survive. Through the 'popular sovereignty' principle, a man of tricks like Willie Stark is ironically greatly welcomed. The novel apparently presents an irony of the American democracy. The people who trust in Willie's accountability are cheated and used to boost his power. Warren possibly sees the danger that a democratic society which celebrates the people power is abused by a leader like Willie. Instead of creating a fair society, Willie cheats the people to make himself dominant and thus very powerful.

Meanwhile, in All the President's Men, the authors passionately celebrate the success of the American democracy. They are so proud to introduce the democracy as an ideal philosophy. They describe how neat the democratic system works and how earnest the Americans are in upholding their democratic values. The fall of Nixon answers the consistency of the People to the American democracy.