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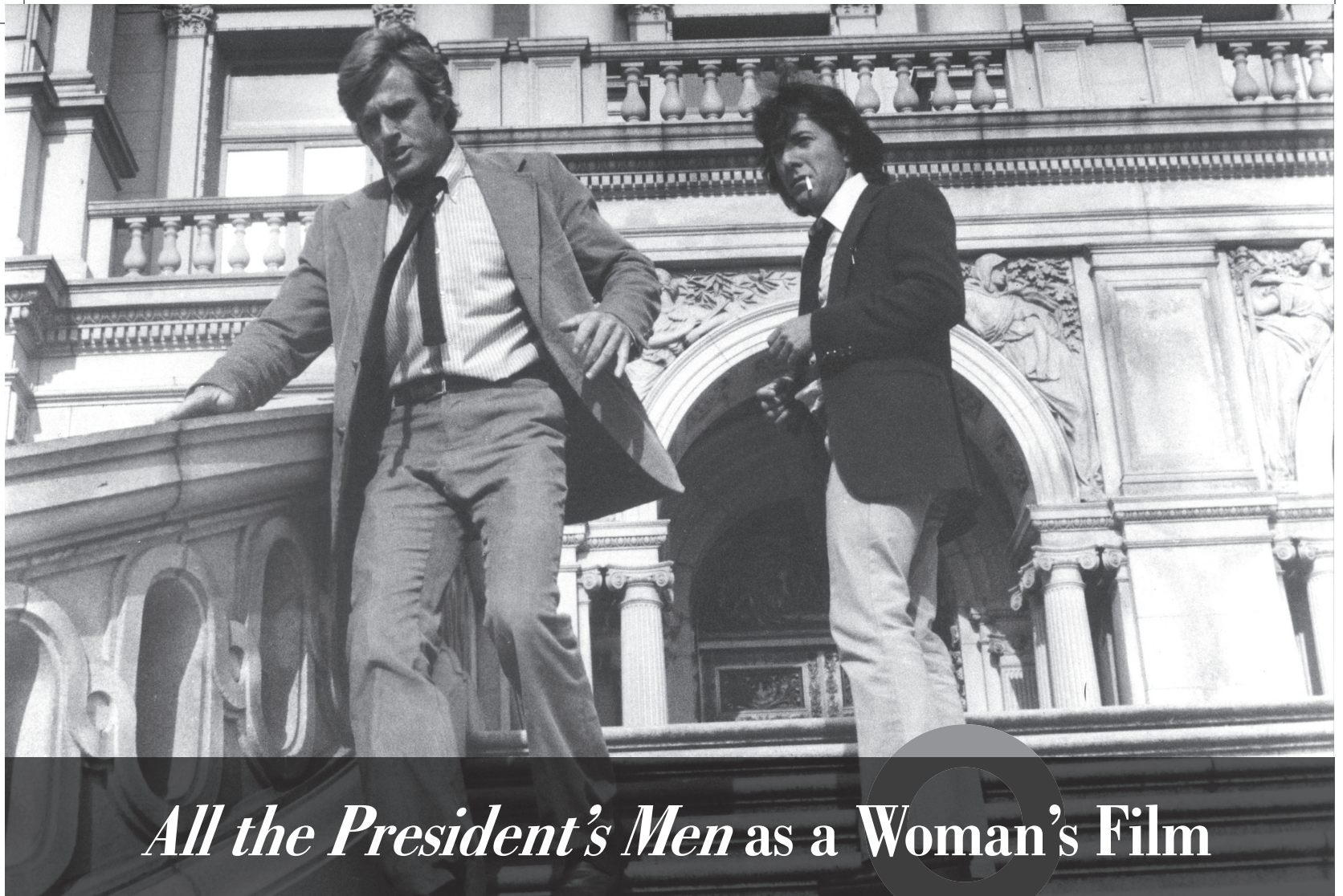
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All the President's Men as a Woman's Film

Bob Woodward (Robert Redford) and Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) on the steps of the Library of Congress.

By Elizabeth Kraft

Abstract: The author reads Alan J. Pakula's 1976 film as a "woman's film." The vignettes focused on women witnesses to the cover-up of the Watergate burglary reveal the pattern of seduction and abandonment common to soap opera and melodrama. The "woman's film" is a suitable genre through which to address the deep distress suffered by the nation at the discovery of presidential (patriarchal) betrayal.

Keywords: Stanley Cavell, Molly Haskell, Emmanuel Levinas, melodrama, Alan J. Pakula, *Washington Post*, Watergate, "woman's film"

Alan J. Pakula's 1976 film *All the President's Men* fits loosely into several generic categories, firmly into none. It is most often referred to as a detective film or a conspiracy thriller, and certainly the whodunit narrative pattern is catalyzed by the quiet, dark scene of the break-in and developed throughout the film by scenes revealing periodic discoveries adding up to a revelation of guilt in the end. The narrative tension of the film is driven by our willingness to forget what we know and participate in the mystery, the accumulation of evidence, and the unmasking of villainy. We wanted to know in 1972 and 1973 whether or not President Richard Nixon would be held accountable for the Watergate break-in; we were fascinated then and have

remained fascinated to this day by the way the reporters, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, pieced together a case, episodically and daily.

The film partakes of other genres as well. The "buddy film," for example, provides another structuring device. Woodward and Bernstein develop from rivals into collaborators in a challenge to power on two levels—the hierarchy of influence in national politics and the hierarchy of influence at the *Washington Post*. We think of them as buddies, a mismatched pair but a workable team—such as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid or Joe Buck and Ratso Rizzo. These associations would have occurred to audiences in 1976, as Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman were linked in the imaginations of moviegoers of that time.

Each had enjoyed individual success as a half of another buddy team, but, perhaps more significantly, the two films in which they earned buddy renown were produced in the same year, 1969, and both were nominated for Best Picture. *Midnight Cowboy* won the award, but *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* won a place in the hearts of the American moviegoing public. Robert Redford was the closest thing the 1970s had to a matinee idol, and Dustin Hoffman was the decade's artiste. Between them, they defined American male stardom, and their "buddiness" was inherent in their opposite looks, roles, and performance styles.

Another genre alluded to early in the film is the "common man" genre or the "David and Goliath" narrative that Frank Capra perfected in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. These allusions occur early in *All the President's Men*, and they provide more emotional than structural guidance. We root for the "hungry" young journalists, but we do not expect—nor do we get—a confrontation between the powerless and the powerful. In a film about media, everything, including confrontation, is mediated by the newspaper and the television. These are journalists, not senators or businessmen; they write, and their war is a war of words.

Without denying the importance of each of these genres to the overall effect of *All the President's Men*, I suggest another way of reading this film—one that accounts more fully for all its dimensions, especially for its emotional impact and cultural significance. In the following pages, I will argue that *All the President's Men* is basically a "woman's film," a suitable genre in which to address the deep distress suffered by the nation at the discovery of presidential (patriarchal) betrayal. As Molly Haskell notes in her 1974 essay on "the woman's film," the term itself is used in genre studies "as a term of critical opprobrium . . . [which] carries the implication that women, and therefore women's emotional problems, are of minor significance" (20). But, she continues, "in the thirties and forties . . . the 'woman's film' . . . was as regular an item in studio production as the

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crime melodrama or the Western" (21). The "woman's film," also known as the "weepie," offered the woman viewer the chance to purge frustration at her lot in life through vicarious identification with a victimized, suffering female. As Haskell notes, the genre, like any genre, has highs and lows. At the lowest level, the "woman's film" functions as "soap opera" or "soft-core emotional porn for the frustrated housewife" (21).¹ At the highest level (as in Max Ophüls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* or King Vidor's *Stella Dallas*, for example), the genre exhibits an acute sensitivity to women's concerns, dignity, and even power. The best "woman's films" are centered on "the woman who begins as victim of discriminatory circumstances and rises, through pain, obsession, or defiance, to become mistress of her fate" (23). Further, Haskell argues, "her ascent is given stature and conviction not through a discreet contempt for the female sensibility, but through an all-out belief in it, through the faith, expressed in directorial sympathy and style, that the swirling river of a woman's emotions is as important as anything on earth" (23).

Haskell ends her essay on the "woman's film" by noting its demise:

Eventually women-oriented films, like the women-oriented plays from which many of them were adapted, disappeared from the cultural scene. The derisive attitude of the eastern critical establishment won the day and drove them out of business. But at one time the 'matinee audience' had considerable influence on movie production and on the popularity of certain stars. This influence has waned to the point that the only films being made for women are the afternoon soaps,

and there is very little attempt to appeal to women in either regular films or nighttime television. (29)

This argument can be supported by exceptions that prove the rule. In 1970, the "weepie" *Love Story* was a box office hit and a critical success, garnering seven Academy Award nominations and making Ryan O'Neal and Ali McGraw genuine Hollywood superstars. Significantly, however, from 1964 to 1969, Ryan O'Neal enjoyed a measure of fame as a soap opera star in television's first prime-time soap opera, *Peyton Place*, in which he starred as Rodney Harrington, opposite Mia Farrow's Allison MacKenzie and Barbara Parkins's Betty Anderson. Farrow and Parkins also starred in "woman's films"—*Rosemary's Baby* (1968), a soap opera/horror hybrid, and *Valley of the Dolls* (1967), a pure "weepie," respectively. Haskell's general sense that by the 1970s the "woman's film" was the province of television serials—or, more specifically, of soap opera television serial actors and audiences—seems fitting.

From mid-May to early August of 1973, soap operas (as well as other daytime programming, that is, game shows and cartoons) were preempted by the Senate Watergate hearings. The high drama (and high stakes) represented by the congressional inquiry found a ready audience in soap opera enthusiasts. One study found that 85 percent of American households tuned in to some portion of each day's proceedings, aired on a rotating basis on the three networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC.² Demographics and domestic habits of the 1970s guaranteed that the primary viewing audience for the hearings was composed largely of women who did not work outside the home and young people—college students, especially. *All the President's Men* addresses both of those audiences, appealing, as do all thrillers and detective stories, to the young person's desire to master knowledge and unseat power, but invoking as well the emotional distress caused by betrayal, lies, cheating, and arrogant disregard for the rights and feelings of others—the distress, in other words, typically examined and cathartically exorcized in soap operas or in the melodramatic "woman's film."

It is hard to imagine any viewer actually crying during a screening of *All the President's Men*, and Pakula was certainly not attempting to create a “weepie” in the conventional sense of the term. *All the President's Men*, despite a title that would suggest otherwise, pays tribute to women's emotions, knowledge, and power on a number of levels. In the beginning, however, we are definitely in a “man's world.” Within the first six minutes, the film makes explicit allusions to the cultural roles—angel (or lady) and whore—conventionally assigned to women in a patriarchal society, a society such as the one doubly referenced in the film by the White House hierarchy and the bureaucratic pecking order at the *Washington Post*.

The opening sequence shows a television news report on Nixon's June 1, 1972, speech to the joint houses of Congress, with the announcer intoning the familiar “Ladies and Gentlemen, President Nixon will in a moment address the Congress and the people of the United States”—a curiously formal announcement. Who are these “Ladies and Gentlemen”? The home viewing audience, if watching, is not playing those roles. They are distracted television viewers, snacking on potato chips, watching or half-watching between domestic chores—putting the kids to bed, washing dishes—listening or half-listening between remarks they make to each other. These fictional ladies and gentlemen addressed by the announcer are nowhere to be found. In the House chamber you see only gentlemen, row after row of men in suits, with perhaps one exception—in the grainy image one can make out a figure with coiffed hair and no sideburns, possibly a woman.

The second reference to women in the opening sequences of the film is also indistinct. One of the arresting officers encountering the burglars in the Watergate building shouts, “Hold it, you motherfuckers! Police! Put your hands up!” but his voice is loud and hurried; it is somewhat difficult to hear the epithet for what the script reveals it to be—a word that situates women at the opposite end of the spectrum from the “Ladies” listening to Nixon's speech. “Motherfucker,” of course, refers to a man, not a woman;

nevertheless, the implication about deviant sexual behavior necessarily involves a woman acting or being acted on inappropriately. She is the whore of patriarchy, the mother whose sexuality provokes anxiety and contempt from her sons, especially her sons carrying phallic symbols confronting other sons holding other phallic symbols.

The third reference places us again in the realm of sexuality, but a domesticated, comfortable (albeit threatened) sexuality. This instance occurs at the *Post* on the Saturday morning after the break-in at Watergate. Managing editor Howard Simons (Martin Balsam) enters the office of city editor Harry M. Rosenfeld (Jack Warden) and says: “Harry, I got something for you. Couple sleeping in bed, car hits the house, goes through their bed and comes out the other side.” Harry responds: “Good morning. Crash.” Significantly, when Harry says these words, he reaches for the phone. Bob Woodward, aroused from sleep, grabs for a notepad to take down Harry's news: a burglary at the Democratic Headquarters. “Woodward, that's *National Democratic Headquarters*.” The cadence is very much like “Good morning. Crash,” as is the sense of the scene. Woodward's domestic space has just been invaded by the equivalent of a car that has crashed through the wall and gone out the other side. The phone is the car in this case, and if we miss that point, there is a poster hanging on Harry's office wall that reads “Telephone” in big bold letters above two figures—a woman facing left, back-to-back with a man facing right. We see the poster come into full view as Carl Bernstein enters the scene offering to aid the Watergate investigation. His offer rebuffed, he leaves saying, “I'll work the phones.” Harry's sardonic “Yeah, you work the phones” is indicative of a disdainfulness that will change as the film progresses and Bernstein moves to the center of the action. It is significant that in this scene Bernstein stands beneath the woman in the telephone print, his longish hair and thin, small, jeans-clad body seeming frail and effeminate compared to the burly, middle-aged, rumples-shirt-sleeves-and-loosened-tie look of the editor. There is generational tension here, but there is also gender tension rumbling

beneath the surface of male posturing. There is some sense as Bernstein leaves the office that the domain into which he wanders is one that is not fully under Harry's control. From the patriarchal view that the film will eventually subvert, this world is gendered feminine. It is a world of darkness, mystery, and deception, a world eventually brought into view by frightened, faceless (and often female) witnesses, many of whom are on the other ends of telephones “worked by” Woodward and Bernstein.

The investigation begins, however, in the world of men. Woodward attends the indictment hearing of the Watergate burglars. He shows up, expecting to cover the story of some common thieves represented by the court-appointed attorney, and he finds the burglars have their own lawyer—a “country club type” named Markham. “Burglars have their own counsel? Kind of unusual, wouldn't you say?” Woodward asks. “For burglars it's unusual,” he is told. For soap opera fans, it is par for the course. Once Nicholas Coster appears



on the screen, the film announces itself as a film that takes women seriously.

Coster, who from 1972 to 1975 starred as lawyer Robert Delaney in the soap opera *Another World*, gives a tour de force performance as Markham in his scene with Redford, filmed in an intimate medium-range shot that focuses on the actor's upper body, face, and hands. Markham's expressions are indicative of a mind at work; his reactions to Woodward's intrusive questioning indicate a double register of information conveyed and information hidden. With patrician camaraderie and infectious affability, Markham twice laughs along with Woodward as he feigns ignorance of the entire proceedings. The contrast between Markham's gravitas when alone, his fleeting annoyance when he senses Woodward's presence behind him, and his geniality when he actually speaks would be instantly readable to audiences familiar with soap opera characterizations. We do not know what Markham is doing in that courtroom, and we never really find out. He is obviously there in

connection with the Watergate burglars, but he is not the lawyer of record. He is present with no clear purpose, and the audience senses he is up to something. Soap opera characters hide something that the next scene will reveal. By casting Coster at this point in his career, when every soap opera fan would have recognized his face and would have been accustomed to reading that face with a certain degree of skepticism, Pakula signals a movement from one sort of detective story to another. Whereas all investigative reporting depends on collecting and analyzing data, interviewing sources, and testing testimony, this investigation is going to require unusual skills and attention to matters that usually go unnoticed.

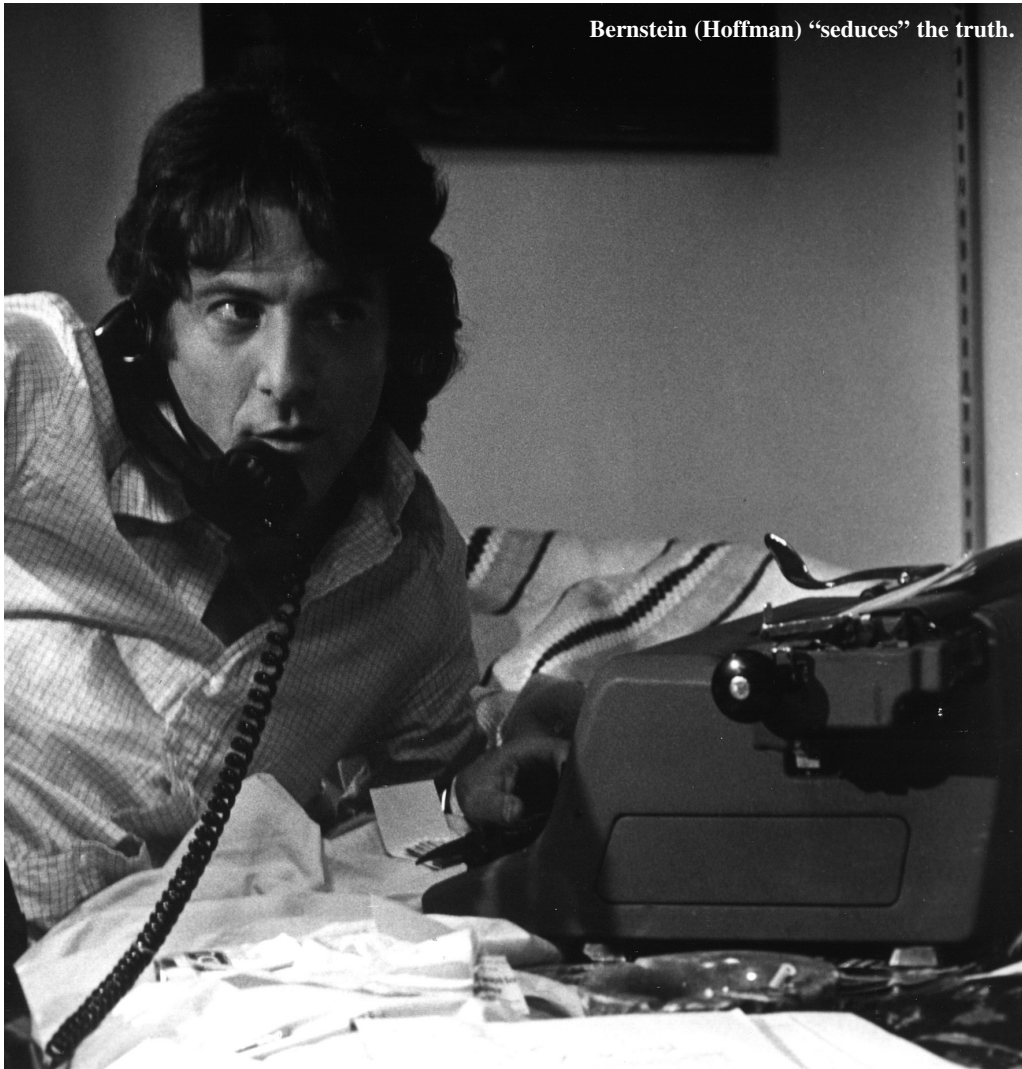
Hoffman's Carl Bernstein reinforces that impression in the next scene, in which the reporters meet in the editor's office to discuss the arraignment. Here a certain amount of incredulity is evident. What were these burglars doing and why? Nixon is ahead in the polls. In fact, the senior *Washington Post* staff seems dismissive of

Bernstein's insistence that the object of the "burglary" was bugging. "You really think they were trying to bug O'Brien?" "Well, I think it's obvious," Bernstein responds. "They weren't out to bug secretaries." "I'm not interested in what you think is obvious," Harry Rosenfeld snaps back. "I'm interested in what you can prove." What Bernstein and Woodward eventually find they can "prove" comes mostly from "secretaries."

From this point on, the film moves beyond the gender stereotyping that seeps into casual remarks by all the *Post*'s men, for it turns out that power in Washington in 1972 is undergirded by women with a lot of information in their memories or at their fingertips. Woodward, on making the first significant phone call, delivers a line over his shoulder to a person off-screen: "You can dial the White House direct, can't you?" "Yes," says a female voice. "What's the number?" he replies. Without missing a beat, the voice answers "4561414." He does the calling, but she knows the number. And when someone at the White House answers Woodward's call, it is again a "secretary" who provides the next clue, the next source for Woodward to pursue.

Bernstein and Woodward were not particularly well connected as they began their investigation of the Watergate burglaries, although Bernstein "knew a lot of people." Pakula's own sense of the story was not so much a "David and Goliath" battle of strength and will (although there are aspects of that paradigm) as it was a narrative about journalistic labor—the goal being "truth" and the adversaries being those who wish to hide the truth.³ In fact, most of the people Woodward and Bernstein encounter face-to-face in the film fall into the latter category. Genuine obstruction and obfuscation generally occur over the phone lines. Even the lawyer Markham, who does not wish to talk to Woodward, allows his face to communicate that he has something to hide. Letting anyone see that much invites him to ask for more. Therefore, it is no surprise that many of the face-to-face interviews between reporters and subjects in this film have the structure of a seduction-abandonment narrative, one of the typical patterns of a "woman's

Bernstein (Hoffman) "seduces" the truth.



film,” which often features a vulnerable heroine rejected by the man she loves.

The pattern is established in the first interview Bernstein has with a potential source, played by Penny Peyser. This character is called “girl” and “secretary” in William Goldman’s prerehearsal screenplay, but in the film she has a name, Sharon Lyons (Goldman 248). As the scene begins, we seem to be in

know something. She knows the “scuttlebutt” that Howard Hunt (also secretive—“Now, *he’s* secretive, but a nice man”) was “investigating Kennedy,” taking out books from the White House library on Chappaquiddick. When Bernstein asks why, Sharon Lyons says, “The White House is real paranoid about Teddy Kennedy.” The seduction has been successful; what has been shared is not sexual plea-

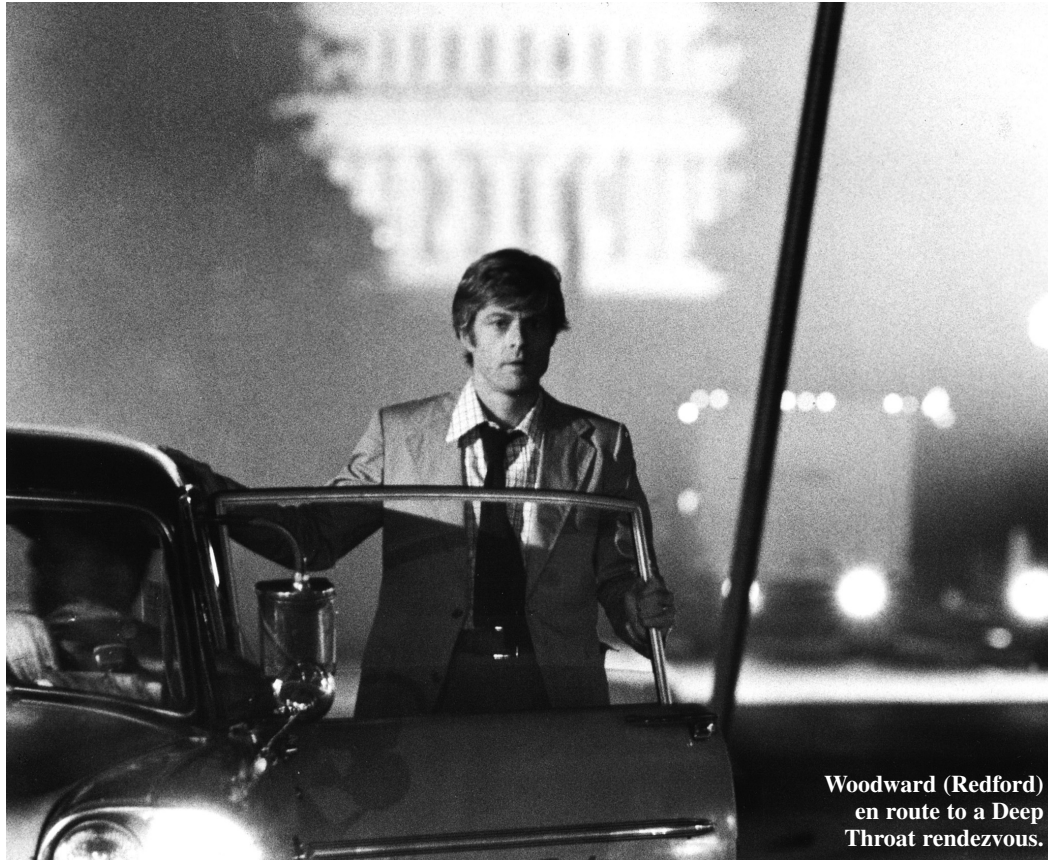
sonal responsibility. When confronted by Bernstein, Woodward, or both, these women have hard choices to make, and the film highlights the difficulty of making the decisions, also implying something about the personal cost exacted as a result of “doing the right thing.”

Two of these women—neither of whom appears in the prerehearsal screenplay—are colleagues of Bernstein and Woodward. The scenes that feature them take place in the newsroom, filmed on the brilliantly lit set that Pakula requested of cinematographer Gordon Willis:

One of the first things I said to Gordon was, “I want very deep focus in this film. I want it sharp and hard. It’s about reporters who try to see everything, who are always looking. So you’ve just got to have that kind of mentality behind the cinematography. [...] I said that I wanted a world without shadows; I wanted a world where nothing is hidden. The hub of this film is what they do, and what newspapers do and what investigative reporters do is try to expose the truth about everything. Nothing can be left secret or hidden. (Pakula 30–31)

The ruthlessness of the light is symbolic of the ruthlessness of a quest for truth. Even people who help find themselves standing in the glare, secrets exposed, privacy exploded. Both Kay Eddy (Lindsay Crouse) and Sally Aiken (Penny Fuller) have vital information that Bernstein and Woodward need. Eddy has access through her former fiancé to a list of CREEP (Committee to Re-elect the President, a Nixon fundraising organization) employees. Aiken has information that the “Canuck” letter that destroyed Edmund Muskie’s campaign for the presidency was authored by Ken Clausen, special counsel to President Nixon. To elicit the information from both Eddy and Aiken, Bernstein and Woodward must shine their lights into the personal lives of both women.

Crouse, in particular, is effective at displaying a range of emotion and thought as her essential part in the story is played out. Approached by Woodward and Bernstein because they remember she “goes with,” indeed is “engaged to,” a guy who works for CREEP, she is at first self-possessed and confident as she states with cheerful, flirtatious finality,



Woodward (Redford)
en route to a Deep
Throat rendezvous.

soap opera territory again. The setting is an outdoor restaurant with the Lincoln Memorial in the background; the camera establishes the setting with a long shot in which we can barely distinguish Hoffman and a dark-haired actress sitting across from one another at a table. When the scene cuts to a two-shot, we seem to be witnessing a flirtation with smiling, side-glances, and some innuendo (“My girlfriend told me to watch out for you”). Whereas the tone is flirtatious, the questions are pertinent: “Stubing said you worked for Colson.” “Stubing’s crazy. I never worked for Colson; I worked for his assistant. Besides, Colson’s big on secrets anyway; even if I had worked for him, I wouldn’t know anything.” However, despite her protests, she does

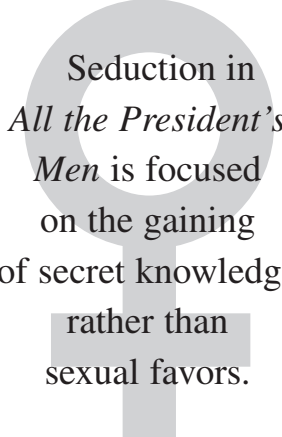
sure but knowledge. The camera catches an expression on the actress’s face that seems almost illustrative of the old adage *post coitum animal triste*—a sadness, an emptiness, a sort of stunned awareness of exchange that may bring pain in the wake of the pleasure of connecting.

This facial registry speaks of knowledge and action with unforeseen consequences, and it is an expression we will see time and again on the faces of the actresses who inhabit the roles of Watergate informants or facilitators to the investigation—Lindsay Crouse, Penny Fuller, Valerie Curtin, and, especially, Jane Alexander. These vulnerable, but ultimately strong, women seem to base their actions not on loyalty to a person but on principles, judgment, and per-

"Not any more." Her assurance crumbles quickly, however, as the reporters urge her to see him again so that she can ask him for a list of CREEP employees. She responds with a hurt "I can't do that; it's personal," and as they continue to press, she begins to reveal unresolved emotions and vulnerability: "You're asking me to use a guy I care about!" When Bernstein insists that she must find a way to help them, she musters the strength to say, "My only chance of getting that story is to see him, and I don't want to see him." Bernstein does not yield—"Well, would you have to see him like that? Couldn't you just call him and ask him to have a drink"—but Woodward cuts the conversation off: "Forget it. We don't want you to do anything that would embarrass you or you don't feel right about." As the reporters walk away, the actress registers an expression of conflict and confusion. When she enters the next scene, a day or so later, and drops a folder on Woodward's desk, the look on her face is more resolute, but not happier. Indeed, her visage registers a kind of resigned self-contempt. It would be plausible to attribute such emotion to the encounter with her ex-boyfriend, but the rueful look she shoots Woodward implies another reading. As portrayed by Crouse, Kay Eddy seems fully aware that her attractive colleague's gallantry and kindness seduced her into doing something she did not want to do, something from which she will derive no personal benefits. Her vulnerability made her susceptible, and the expression on her face is that of a woman who wonders just how long she will keep responding too easily to such emotional lures.

Sally Aiken is in possession of information as the result of a morally ambiguous situation with Ken Clausen. He has told her about the Canuck letter over drinks in her apartment. He is a married man "with a wife and a house and a dog and a cat." He is not so concerned with the possible implications for the president as he is with the disruption of his domestic life. But as *All the President's Men* demonstrates, the two do not inhabit different domains. The president's men, by lying and spreading rumors and investigating private lives, have blurred the distinction and opened the possibility that the same tactics will

be used on them. As the Canuck letter puts the investigation inside the White House, so does the investigation put the president and his dirty-tricks campaign inside the private homes of everyone in the country—not only through the intervention and mediation of television but also through the physical presence of the reporters whose typical strategy with CREEP employees was to knock on doors in the evening and question potential witnesses there. As both Kay and Sally illustrate, when it comes to the treatment of women, the Watergate investigators are not so different from the "president's men" who, as Deep Throat puts it in the film, "bugged, . . . followed people, [gave]



Seduction in
*All the President's
Men* is focused
on the gaining
of secret knowledge
rather than
sexual favors.

false press leads, [wrote] fake letters, . . . cancelled Democratic campaign rallies, . . . investigated Democratic private lives . . . planted spies, stole documents, and on and on." Seduced by their righteous colleagues and driven by their own earnest desire to do the right thing, these women divulge necessary information but are left feeling as though they have betrayed others and have been betrayed in turn.

All the President's Men as a detective story pits good guys in pursuit of truth against bad guys who wish to hide the truth. *All the President's Men* as a "woman's film" suggests that both sets of "guys" are complicit in the creation of a corrupt world in which confidence, sympathy, and trust between individuals are no longer possible. Looking through a woman's eyes, there is not a lot of difference between the way Nixon's men sought out secrets and played tricks in the interest of what they conceived of as a higher good—that is, winning the elec-

tion—and the measures Bernstein and Woodward employ in pursuit of their higher good—that is, ferreting out the truth about who knew what about the Watergate break-in.⁴ There is a crucial scene in which the film makes it clear that the reporters are treading in the footsteps of the villains they pursue: the scene in which they revisit a witness, bookkeeper Judy Hoback (played by Jane Alexander), whom Bernstein had successfully "seduced" the evening before. The purpose of the visit is to persuade Hoback to put names to the initials of the CREEP employees who received money from the slush fund. Before the reporters set forth on their quest, they agree on a plan. Bernstein will ask, "Who is P?" and Woodward will say, "No, we know P is Porter; who is M?" They will also ask her to "confirm," not to reveal, and so they allow the impression that Porter has been named by another source (even though he has not), a piece of information that disarms the bookkeeper to the point of revealing all the information they have come to elicit. In contrast to the first interview, which takes place between Hoback and Bernstein in "a tiny little house" with a "tiny little living room," the second interview is outside, on a porch surrounded by trees and bathed in "an impressionistic, almost Renoir, lovely sunlight, dappled green light, soft light" (Pakula 32–33). It is a "romantic" setting, according to Pakula (33), and the atmosphere seems to soften Judy Hoback. She is prettier and quieter in this scene than in the first. She does not resist the questions as she did the night before. She confirms with composure and calm. When the scene ends with her guileless query, "Who told you about Porter?" we see clearly that her composure is built on the trust she has come to have in Bernstein, and by extension, Woodward. In a reflection of typical gender stereotypes, the successful seduction of the previous night has left her feeling an attachment and an intimacy that her "partner" does not reciprocate. As the scene ends, we know her "partner" has gotten from her what he wants and now he is prepared to abandon her without regret.

Seduction in *All the President's Men* is focused on the gaining of secret knowledge rather than sexual favors. Of course, the big secrets in *All the*

President's Men are those kept by the president and his men, but unearthing these secrets means delving into spaces inhabited by women and women-like men—secretarial spaces, librarian spaces, and bookkeeping spaces. Two specific shots in the film visually establish the analogy between secret knowledge and femininity. First is the crane shot focused on the reporters in the Library of Congress. The shot moves upward until the point of view mimics an over-seeing deity looking down from the rotunda into the womb of the building in which men labor to bring knowledge forth. The second shot is a long shot that reveals a male figure that we take to be Woodward descending the staircase into the depths of the earth (the basement floor of a parking garage), where he will encounter his most important source of knowledge. This source is, of course, Deep Throat—both the narrative's most important access to secret information and its most secret secret. The name "Deep Throat," also the title of a notorious pornographic film, alludes to illicit intimacy. The seduction scene in which Woodward convinces his source to reveal information for the first time is constructed around the phrase "you can trust me," not a false promise in this case, as Woodward kept his closely guarded secret for thirty years.⁵ Nevertheless, the fact that we never see Deep Throat's face clearly is not as important as the fact that we see his half-profile, a glowing cigarette, or a dark shadow through point-of-view shots that equate our vision with Woodward's. Certainly the historical Woodward could see the historical Deep Throat more clearly than we do. However, it is important to remember that a face-to-face encounter has ethical implications that are evaded here.⁶

In a philosophical register, to meet another face-to-face is to recognize one's obligation to another as an other whose identity must not be violated or appropriated in any way. Ethical meetings, in a philosophical sense, are meetings between two individuals on terms of equal exchange. But that is not what Woodward's meetings with Deep Throat are about. They are about the search for hidden information, possessed by one

and desired by another. In a journalistic register, Woodward does all that ethics requires. His obligation is to the truth, not to the other as other. He protects his source to protect his right to other sources. It is appropriate, therefore, that Deep Throat remain in the shadows so that others in possession of dangerous truths know they too can talk in the dark in order to bring truth to light. The "woman's film" is not about ethical exchange in the philosophical sense. The genre that best conveys that sort of ethics is the comedy of remarriage.⁷ Women's films, melodramas, weepies, are about the imbalance of power and the cost of knowledge. And that is what *All the President's Men* is about as well.

All the President's Men in its title seems to exclude women from the picture—the movie and the general portrait of power. Our attention is drawn to the absence of women so clearly in the early scenes that, if we are paying attention, we begin to focus on their presence as well. Robert Redford's wedding ring, transferred to the ring finger of his right hand (as Bob Woodward was unmarried at the time), calls attention to itself as a sign of absence, a sign of singleness and loneliness—a lack. The newsroom itself is presided over by an absence. Ben Bradlee is important to be sure, but he answers to Katharine Graham, whose appearance in the film occurs only in our imaginations, and then in a salacious sense.⁸ Over the phone the voice of John Mitchell threatens: "Tell Katie Graham she'll get her tit caught in a wringer if you print that." Mitchell reminds the viewer of 1976 of the women Bernstein and Woodward would call in the printed account of this investigation "the Greek chorus of the Watergate drama" (Bernstein and Woodward 93). Martha Mitchell was probably the most colorful of the commentators on Watergate. She was a source for Woodward, Bernstein, and many others, but she never makes an appearance. Neither does Rose Mary Woods, Nixon's personal secretary, famous for her loyalty and inventiveness in explaining an eighteen-and-a-half-minute gap in a taped conversation between Nixon and his aides, recorded three days after the break-in at the Watergate.⁹

The most important female absences, however, are probably those of the Nixon household itself—Tricia and Julie Nixon, and Pat, the first lady. We do see an image of Pat Nixon toward the end of the film. It is an image of an image—the television coverage of the inauguration shows Pat Nixon holding the Bible for her husband's second inauguration. Her expression of serenity is rendered tragic by the foreknowledge of every viewer watching the 1976 film. Although we as a nation never saw her in tears, we have felt the anguish of the other women in the movie to this point; we know what awaits the first lady, and the pathos is almost overwhelming before the soundtrack takes over.¹⁰ What we hear as the film ends is the incessant sound of a teletype machine spitting out the news briefs that lead up to the president's resignation in August of 1973. In the background, we see Woodward and Bernstein working, typing the stories that will become fodder for the news agencies. In contrast to the opening sequence in which the striking of typewriter keys sounds like ten clear shots being fired in rapid succession, the teletype soundtrack evokes the clacking of chatter, idle talk, gossip. It is an appropriate ending for a film that has emphasized the power of chitchat, scuttlebutt, and secrets passed from person to person.

Peter Brooks has argued that melodrama is a response to "the loss of conviction in a transcendent basis for the distinction between good and evil" (discussed by Cavell 41); Stanley Cavell is less pessimistic about the genre, reading it in dialogue with comedies of remarriage in which we discover "that our intelligibility to one another is so far a match for the heydays of chaos reaching our ears" (Cavell 45). *All the President's Men* is not a despairing film; good does, after all, prevail; intelligibility is achieved amid the noise of obfuscation. This film documents that it was largely women who provided access to truth, who lit the path on which the reporters pursued the secrets the president's men wanted to keep in the dark. However, instead of being collaborators who share in the victory and feel the ecstasy of success along with the reporters, these women are the "forgotten women" of

melodrama. It is true that their stories do not take over the film text as they do in films that are firmly placed in the melodrama genre; but Pakula's attention to the cameo performances, as well as the repetition within those cameos of the melodramatic pattern of seduction and abandonment, creates an emotional countercurrent to the arc of the narrative. Therefore, it is important to see this film as a "woman's film." The achievement celebrated in *All the President's Men* does not come about by traditional masculine prowess and mastery; it comes from attention to activities normally presided over by women—the banal, the quotidian, the ordinary things of life. As this moment in history is appropriately recalled as a triumph for journalism, this film reminds us of the sadness of the moment as well. In the end, the revelation of truth is not enough to repair a world in which intimacy serves as a pretext for exchanges that ultimately end up in the public domain. In such a world—a world we still inhabit—every story is potentially a story of loss, heart-break, and tears.

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NOTES

1. See Linda Williams, who discusses women's melodramas, pornography, and horror as three genres that affect the bodies of viewers with the same responses as are depicted on the screen (weeping, orgasm, and fear, respectively).

2. To be completely accurate, the rotation began on June 5 after an initial viewing schedule, beginning on May 17, in which the three commercial networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, all devoted at least five hours a day to coverage of the hearings (Garay). The rotation agreement left each network the option to "carry, on its own, part, or all of the live broadcast of each hearing session" (Krebs 63). As Garay reports, some (extended) moments were judged too priceless to pass up: "All three networks elected to carry the nearly 30 hours of testimony by key witness and former White House counsel John Dean."

3. Pakula did refer to the "David and Goliath" story in a 1976 interview with the

American Film Institute. The "David and Goliath" image of the film, he said, was "Bob Woodward, a little figure in the background, with this tiny, silly little typewriter, plucking away at it" (Pakula 64).

4. Although the film is seen as a celebration of investigative journalism and a triumph for the reporters, the performances of the actresses allow the film to record the emotional realities of those on whose information that triumph was built. As David H. Richter states, "Historical films inevitably say more than they can possibly know about the past" (142). On the film as a celebration of American journalism at the expense of historical accuracy, see Robert Brent Toplin (180–201), and William E. Leuchtenburg.

5. In late May 2005, this secret was revealed by Deep Throat himself. He was Mark Felt, who, in 1972, was the second-ranking official at the FBI.

6. For the ethical implications of meeting another "face-to-face," see Emmanuel Levinas (79–81).

7. See Cavell on the melodrama or "woman's film" as a genre which is derived from and which negates the "comedy of remarriage" (1–10).

8. For Katharine Graham's reaction to the making of the film, to the film itself, and to her absence therein, "except for the one famous allusion to my anatomy" (502), see her *Personal History* (500–03).

9. Woods died on January 22, 2005 and was remembered in obituaries as a loyal friend to Nixon and his family. Her testimony as to how the erasure accidentally occurred is generally regarded as preposterous, but as the *London Times* reported at the time of her death, "Although the prosecution said her account was implausible, they were not able to disprove it" ("Rose Mary Woods"). See also the obituary in the *New York Times* in which Philip Shenon describes Woods as "the most doggedly loyal and tight-lipped of the president's inner circle" ("Rose Mary Woods, Nixon's Secretary, Dies"). Interestingly, Nixon asked Woods to break the news of his resignation to his family. In her diary, Tricia Nixon remarked on the revelation and the aftermath. She called it "a day of tears" ("Rose Mary Woods").

10. For Pat Nixon's reaction to the scandal and the events that followed, see Madeleine Edmondson and Alden Duer Cohen 216–26.

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